Commentary

June 1997

After Zionism

Hillel Halkin

European Union—A Disaster in the Making

David Pryce-Jones

Doing Daddy Down

Elizabeth Powers

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Terry Teachout

Books in Review

Franklin Hunt • *André Aciman* • *Christopher Caldwell*
Joseph Adelson • *Daniel J. Mahoney* • *Elliott Abrams*

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NEW YORK, NEW YORK

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Commentary
June 1997

Letters from Readers

The Intellectuals

To the Editor:

Now let me see if I have got this right: according to David Gelernter ["How the Intellectuals Took Over (And What to Do About It)," March], up until the end of World War II, the most important criterion for admission to America's most prestigious universities was money and good breeding, and, as a direct consequence, our country enjoyed national civility even in times of conflict because our leaders were born and bred gentlemen.

Then, inexplicably, the (largely Protestant) establishment heading these colleges committed class suicide by needlessly throwing open the gates to barbarian hordes of Jews and other in-your-face types, who were admitted primarily on the basis of (shudder!) *intellect* and who brought with them an *attitude*. No gentlemen these, and behold, we are now reaping the whirlwind of that mistake: David Letterman won't say "Frenchman" and the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) has been forced to accept women. Both of these examples stand as tragic symbols of a political correctness that flows directly from the raging hostility that intellectual Jews and their fellow running dogs of the Left have toward the middle class.

All this is not only offensive, but is based on an ignorance that does its author and Commentary no credit.

First of all, the civility of discourse that Mr. Gelernter remembers somehow escaped my attention during those prewar years.

Second, the changes in university- and college-admission policies that took place in the late 1940's and thereafter were the result of complex forces, stemming in part from a sense of obligation to returning veterans, and in part from a belief that restrictive quotas against Jews were indefensible. Meanwhile, the economy was booming and industry's appetite for college-educated employees was for a time nearly insatiable.

There was no way that any major American university, prestigious or not, could have or should have failed to respond to these forces. The resultant growth in the size of the educational establishment forced the universities to try to rationalize and objectify their admission process, hence the birth of the SAT's and other criteria based on academic achievement and promise.

The old elite did not do something unnecessary and foolish: what the old elite did was inevitable, necessary, reasonable, rational, and equitable. It ended quotas and expanded its institutions in response to societal changes and needs.

Richard Landau
Waltham, Massachusetts

To the Editor:

The intellectuals David Gelernter refers to in the title of his article came from the elite universities, which, he tells us, changed dramatically after World War II, the most dramatic change being the admission of Jews on the basis of their qualifications rather than under the minuscule quota system that was then in place for Jewish applicants.

This quota system operated not only for student admissions but with even greater rigor in the selection of faculty. It may or may not be true that when Lionel Trilling and Clifton Fadiman were being considered for positions in the Columbia University English department, they were told that there was room for only one Jew. It may or may not be true that when Harry Levin was being considered for a position in the Harvard English department, the eminent Shakespearean scholar, George Lyman Kittredge, said, "Over my dead body will a Jew be admitted to the department." (Levin was

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hired; Kittredge survived.) But what is true, and this I can say with assurance, is that at the now-nonexistent Bronx division of New York University, where more than half the students were Jewish (including many who, like me, had been denied admission to elite universities), there was *one* Jewish professor, Louis Max. It is a pretty safe bet that Mr. Gelernter himself would not have found ready employment at Yale in the 30's, whatever his specialty and qualifications.

I can speak of these matters with the authority of my age, seventy-eight, but I cannot believe that Mr. Gelernter is unaware of the rampant anti-Semitism in the golden age he wishes to recover. As he makes clear in his article, he is certainly aware that the changes he deplores are in important measure attributable to the large-scale admission of Jews. In fact, the subtext of the article almost becomes text when he refers to how this process worked itself out at Yale: "One dramatic sign was the big influx of Jews."

Mr. Gelernter then recoils from the implication of this statement, saying, "The intellectualizing trend went a lot farther than bringing in Jews, of course." But he quickly lunges forward again: "Jews," he says,

> are a dye-marker that allows us to trace a new class of people as it moves into the system—a new class distinguished by intellect and not social standing.

It is surprising to find an anti-Semitic article in COMMENTARY, yet for the reasons given above, I cannot view "How the Intellectuals Took Over (And What to Do About It)" in any other light.

DAVID GOLDKNOPF
Gardiner, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

David Gelernter argues that the New Class prized intellect over breeding, took over during the 1960's, and is responsible for things being a mess. But it gets worse: he further claims that a clearly identifiable group, legendary for its lack of breeding, whose members lived and died by their intellect, predated the New Class. That group was composed of the brilliant but poor and lower-middle-class Jews who for approximately 50 years made City College the greatest undergraduate college that America—perhaps any modern nation—has ever seen. This type was embodied by Alcove One's debating society, some of whose members went on to found the neoconservative movement.

Is Mr. Gelernter embarrassed by the likes of Irving Kristol? Does he wish that there had been no City College to admit brilliant Jews lacking breeding and money, who could then use their education to attain influence?

If David Gelernter is any indication, neoconservatism has betrayed the principles on which it was built: merit and intellect.

MARK RUST
Far Rockaway, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

Having evolved politically along the same road COMMENTARY has taken in the last 30 or 40 years, and having been a reader of the magazine since 1948, I yield to no one in my detestation of what the current crop of "intellectuals"—the deconstructionists, post-structuralists, feminists, and tenured leftists—have wrought in the colleges and universities of this country, especially in the humanities departments. But David Gelernter uses the term "intellectual" to indict an entire class in such a sweeping fashion that one wonders whether he can actually be serious about the charge he is making. After all, even Julien Benda, in his landmark 1927 work *La Trahison des Clercs* (published in English as *The Treason of the Intellectuals*), carefully defined the term—and took an entire book to do it!

Thus, when Mr. Gelernter talks of a "takeover" by the intellectuals, he does not provide any specific examples other than a dismissive reference to "Trotskyists around *Partisan Review* in 1930's New York" (another example of sloppy thinking), but employs instead the broad, slashing strokes of an anti-intellectual bull in an intellectual china-shop. Indeed, in looking back to a mythological time of the kind depicted in a Norman Rockwell painting, Mr. Gelernter is taking a stance befitting a knee-jerk paleoconservative rather than a neoconservative. Even paleoconservatives of early George-Wallace, pointy-headed-professors fame would heartily agree with his thesis.

Mr. Gelernter speaks of the universities being turned "upside down" after World War II. I am a veteran of that war and a recipient of the benefits of the GI Bill which permitted me, as well as millions of other vets, to enroll in a university. My professors in the mid-40's, early 50's, and well into the early 60's, when I was working on my own doctorate at the University of New Mexico, were scholars of national repute. Few of them had Left political agendas. And if they did, they did not bring them into their classrooms or lectures.

Perhaps Mr. Gelernter should have set the line of change in his "takeover" at the mid-60's. After all, the Sidney Hooks, Lionel Trillings, and Hannah Arendts were products of the pre-World War II intellectual community, whose (anti-totalitarian) influence was at its high tide in the immediate postwar years.

As a retired college instructor myself, I gain the distinct impression from conversations I have had with young people who are attending college that the current crop of "intellectuals" has not taken over. These students are bemused—often amused—by feminist professors and other professorial leftists on campuses who do not have nearly as much of an impact on their minds and hearts and goals as Mr. Gelernter supposes.

My problem with "How the Intellectuals Took Over," then, is not so much "how" as the extent of that "takeover."

SAM BLUEFARB
Diamond Bar, California

TO THE EDITOR:

I sympathize with and am persuaded by David Gelernter's cultural analysis, but I am puzzled by his proposal that we need "new institutions" such as colleges, media organizations, and museums. To begin with, I am not exactly sure what a conservative museum would be like, or why we need one. Secondly we already have quite a lot of

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conservative schools and colleges, and, I would have thought, we surely have enough conservative periodicals.

I suppose what Mr. Gelernter means is that these institutions, especially the colleges, do not exercise the cultural influence of their left-wing or mainstream counterparts. But how do you acquire cultural influence? Undoubtedly in the slow, gradual, cumulative way the prestige colleges acquired it, as Mr. Gelernter has so lucidly described.

Leaving aside the question of whether it would even be feasible these days to found a major new private university, the real problem is that if we did establish a conservative new Yale, people would still prefer the old Yale, simply because there are many advantages that accrue to membership in a centuries-old institution (as Mr. Gelernter himself has pointed out), and these are by no means entirely vitiated if one happens to dislike many of the opinions of the current faculty. Moreover, if these new institutions were somehow endowed with instant prestige and influence, what would save them from being coopted by the new elite?

Mr. Gelernter's acute analysis of the pervasive influence of the new elite seems to contradict his assumption that institutions can be insulated from it. His proposal for the setting up of new institutions is in fact utopian, in the worst sense of that word. The essence of utopianism is the belief that we can start the world over with a brand-new set of cities or institutions created out of thin air, and the corollary is that existing institutions are hopelessly irredeemable. Philosophical conservatism ought to be anti-utopian by definition.

Reforming existing universities will be fully as difficult a task as Mr. Gelernter says. But that is the only place to start. And the fact that Yale supports David Gelernter does make one wonder if the place could be as totally hopeless as he seems to think.

DOYNE DAWSON
Greensboro, North Carolina

TO THE EDITOR:

For what seems almost forever now, though it is maybe only ten years, I have alternated between tearing my hair and venting my spleen over America's inexorable leftward cultural creep and the seeming lack of any explanation for it, or any course of action that would put a stop to it. Thus I am extremely grateful for David Gelernter's insights.

As I fairly flew through his article, I could hear a little voice within me crying out: "Yes. Just so. I think he's right!" But also, every time I came to the phrase "intellectual elite," I heard another voice in me screaming in frustration: "No! No! Not 'intellectual'—*leftist, leftist!*" It is leftist intellectuals who have wreaked the havoc Mr. Gelernter describes. I can only wonder why he never mentions the Left except in a quotation from Seymour Martin Lipset and once in his penultimate paragraph.

As for what to do, I believe there is one workable approach. The subversion can be undone the same way it was done: from the top, politically, in the bright light of day. The majority of America is working-class, anti-intellectual, and does not for a second like what is happening. If such Americans could gain even a casual understanding of the truth of this elite takeover, I believe they would give electoral support to a conservative leadership which could start putting pressure in the right place—the judiciary.

BILL D. MILLER
Barton, Vermont

TO THE EDITOR:

David Gelernter is right on the mark in tracing the current political crisis to the universities. What he does

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not make sufficiently clear, however, is the difference in world view intellectuals bring with them when they usurp power. Thus the reader cannot clearly understand why it is that, as he says, "today's elite loathes the nation it rules." And without understanding this, he can have no clear idea of what to do about the situation.

Mr. Gelernter touches on this question when he says, in connection with the Supreme Court's attack on the Virginia Military Institute, that the Court's purpose is to make "men and women . . . in practice interchangeable." Further discussion in this vein might have suggested that critics have been correct in pointing to social engineering as the real aim of the new elite. In the world of the new elite, society and even nature itself are to be transformed.

Clearly this social engineering stands in fundamental opposition to every concern held by the citizenry. What today's elite cannot endure is that the average citizen lives as if nature were a given. At the heart of the new elite's world view is its desire for permanent revolution. The new elite would deny that "the laws of Nature and of Nature's God" are based in any unchangeable reality. They rebel against America's very being, its determination to live or die by the standard established in nature.

DAVID BROYLES
Wake Forest University
Winston-Salem,
North Carolina

TO THE EDITOR:

I admire David Gelernter's article, but I would like to suggest that the words "loathe" and "hate," which he uses in describing the attitudes of elite intellectuals, though correct, are too broad. I think a better word would be "contempt."

Contempt always underlies a posture of superiority. Under the guise of "improving society" and "knowing what is best for the masses," such an attitude allows its bearer to get away with almost anything. The current elite intelligentsia (exemplified by Bill Clinton, among others) has a profound, albeit hidden, contempt for this country and its people.

PATRICIA MEYEROWITZ
Easton, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR:

David Gelernter hits the nail on the head and his article helps to explain two curious phenomena in contemporary intellectual life.

First is the hysterical hatred of the religious Right expressed by so many pundits. The very term is a giveaway, since by no classical definition of the term are religious conservatives right-wing. The fact is that the churches so termed are the churches of the lower middle class, the only cultural institutions with any appreciable influence which are not controlled by the intellectual class. It is important to note that nearly all the issues in contention—abortion, pornography, church and state, gender equality, same-sex marriage—are issues that the Right wants settled democratically by the people or their representatives and the intellectual class wants settled by the higher courts, which they control.

The other phenomenon is white racism. Why is it that we are constantly being told by our intellectuals that racism is rampant and getting worse, when all our practical experience tells us the opposite? The article on the O.J. Simpson trial by Christopher Caldwell in the same issue ["Johnnie Cochran's Secret"] is a perfect illustration of the phenomenon.

RICHARD A. DAVIS
Columbus, Ohio

TO THE EDITOR:

I greatly enjoyed David Gelernter's insights into the intellectual elite. But perhaps he did not go far enough. He recounts the telling vignette of David Letterman's discomfort in saying "Frenchman." Why have the letters *m-a-n* become so poisonous on the tongue? I think the answer lies in a depressing aspect of the intellectual class that Mr. Gelernter missed: its intolerance. In the absence of religion, politically-correct speech and action have become, for intellectuals, a substitute for a sense of community. (Cheering for sports teams serves the same function for non-intellectuals.)

The user of "he or she," "French person," etc. is a member in good standing of the club, one of the righteous. Similar totems are the AIDS ribbon and the recycling bin.

Then there are the expressions that identify the bad guys: "I like listening to Rush Limbaugh"; "I voted for Ronald Reagan." Such remarks are greeted not with argument but with derision, raised eyebrows, or dismissive sneers. You are one of *them*, not one of *us*.

My own favorite example of this general phenomenon occurred in a movie theater in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1971. There was a moment in the movie (I think it was Woody Allen's *Take the Money and Run*) showing the briefest documentary clip of President Eisenhower and his Vice President engaged in conversation. It may have lasted three seconds. But the theater erupted in a chorus of indignant hissing at the sight of the despised Richard Nixon. The purpose of this outburst, which at first I found incomprehensible, was clearly to affirm the audience's membership in good standing in the community of Nixon-haters. In the absence of other forms of social bonding, it must have been comforting to sit in the dark surrounded by like-minded people.

This intolerance is fundamentally anti-intellectual and inimical to the practice of intellectual discourse, the alleged purpose of a modern university.

RUSSELL ROBERTS
Olin School of Business
Washington University
St. Louis, Missouri

TO THE EDITOR:

The situation described in David Gelernter's masterful and insightful article on the *trahison des clercs* is deeper and more pandemic than even he imagines. When I speak to fellow conservatives I am always amused at how triumphant they seem over the bones we have been thrown in recent years. But, as the Clinton administration proves, we have merely stood still politically, in spite of recent gains.

Within the academy, the gains are nonexistent. I am not talking about the premiere institutions. I am speaking, rather, of the second- and third-level sectarian universities and colleges.

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To understand this fully take, for example, the university at which I work: a medium-sized Midwestern parochial school, a denominational university that is generally thought to be among the most conservative, if not *the* most conservative. And yet the fallout Mr. Gelernter writes of is everywhere apparent here.

We recently revised both our curriculum and printed documents to reflect "gender-neutral" language, multiculturalism, globalism, and the like. Not too long ago we restructured our main offerings to reflect greater relevancy. We are a smoke-free campus, and the vast majority of our faculty rejoice in the education "reforms" suggested by the Clinton administration.

Don't get me wrong. We offer an excellent education. When one compares us with a secular setting, we are vastly superior. But my point is this: the madness of the 60's is so pervasive that even at "archly" conservative institutions, the infection is readily apparent. Many of my colleagues would say we are now "more mainstream." A quick look at what has taken place in the last five years tells a different story.

I agree wholly with David Gelernter. Where we might disagree is over the clean-up. I think we are looking at intellectual Superfund sites.

NAME WITHHELD

DAVID GELERNTER writes:

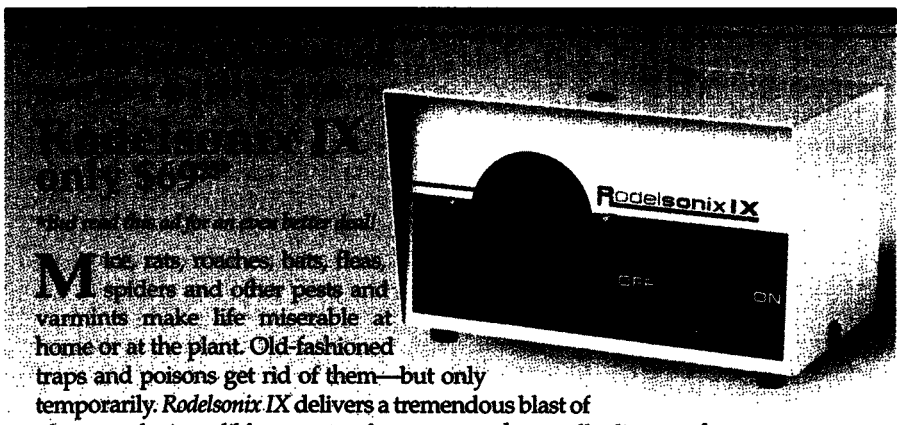
Now let me see if I have got this right, as Richard Landau says: that David Letterman cannot say "Frenchman" and that VMI has been forced to admit women do not matter, and in any case Jewish intellectuals had nothing to do with it. I don't doubt that neither fact matters to Mr. Landau. The soundness of the language, the integrity of certain small Southern military academies do not agitate the *New York Times* much, either, or the leaders of academia or Hollywood or TV or the legal community. At the same time, we face today an American culture that we have to protect our children from instead of launching them into, and I suspect that all this shrugging-off has something to do with it.

To move on: you might legitimately say, as Mr. Landau also does, that you are proud of the prominent role Jewish intellectuals played in creating modern feminism, but to deny that they played it is absurd. Mr. Landau writes that "restrictive quotas against Jews were indefensible," and of course I agree.

David Goldknopf is right about the anti-Jewish hiring policies of prestige universities before World War II; but as I wrote, "starting in the late 1940's, admission and hiring policies were transformed." When he states that I myself "would not have found ready employment at Yale in the 30's," he is again right. The suggestion that this may possibly not have occurred to me is bizarre.

Mr. Goldknopf's assertion that my article is "anti-Semitic" belongs in a special category. I will not lower myself to answer it, but in a broader sense the issue deserves discussion. We have become accustomed nowadays to terms like "racist," "anti-Semitic," "homophobic" (whatever that means—anyway, something bad) being used in the same general way as "filthy pig." No thoughtful person takes such accusations seriously; they are understood to be terms of abuse and admissions of rhetorical failure. The tragedy is that there really are anti-Semites in the world. What will Mr. Goldknopf call them?

Mark Rust is in favor of "merit and intellect." Why not? So am I. He asks whether I am "embarrassed by the likes of Irving Kristol." That's a tough one: no, I am not. I am a big admirer of conservative intellectuals, and by referring to them only in passing I did not mean to suggest that they do not exist or do not matter. On the other hand, while there have always been black sheep and con-



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servative intellectuals, the average sheep is white and the average intellectual is Left. Irving Kristol is an enormously *influential* intellectual, but it would be silly to claim that he is a typical one.

In answer to Sam Bluefarb: I have indeed indicted an entire class in a sweeping fashion. I did it because the class deserves to be indicted. I understand that such indictments are unpopular nowadays, but I don't care. The way to argue the case is in terms of facts and inferences, not by claiming that sweeping indictments are wrong *ipso facto*. That said, of course I do not mean to imply, by condemning "intellectuals," that I mean every last blessed one; but I assume that is obvious.

In case it matters, I think the GI Bill was a great idea, and I share Mr. Bluefarb's impression of modern college students. Many of them *do* seem to reject the hardcore leftist positions their professors peddle in class; many call themselves "centrists." But the Center itself has moved. Many of today's Left positions (for example, on feminism or homosexuality or "multiculturalism" or affirmative action or "animal rights") would have been rejected by 1935 Marxists as sheer nutballism. The Left has moved Left, and the Center has too.

There is a common theme (or sub-theme) to all the letters I have discussed so far; it has to do with Jews. The fact that something is true does not necessarily mean that you serve any purpose by talking about it. Jews have played a central role in the cultural triumph of the Left since the mid-1960's. Everyone knows it; no one denies it. (Jews have played a leading part in modern conservatism also, but that is another story.) So Jews are prominent on the Left; should we talk about it? "This topic is bad for the Jews, so shut up" is an argument for which I myself have a lot of respect.

But to raise this objection in this context at this time strikes me as sheer self-indulgence. In a society where Jews or part-Jews or "ethnic Jews" serve as presidents at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, as Secretaries of Defense, Treasury, and (admittedly by accident) State, hold so many powerful positions in the legal world, and the newspaper world, and the entertainment world, and the art world, and the literary world, I have news for you: we can take it. Jews are ready to take stock of their accomplishments, as a community, for good and bad, and they have a positive obligation to do so. And now is the moment, because—as all those part-Jews and ethnic Jews and sort-of Jews can attest—this community is not fated to survive many more generations, not in anything like its current form. Jews ought to level with themselves while they still can.

Doyne Dawson asks an important question: is it not "utopian," possibly even "in the worst sense of that word," to suggest that conservatives ought to create new institutions? I strongly agree with Mr. Dawson that creating new universities is a losing proposition. But institutions like magazines or private grade schools or movie and TV production companies are born on a regular basis. And it happens that conservatives love to create institutions, and do it all the time. It's just that, for my money, they love creating the wrong kind.

You can (and ought to) criticize Hollywood's fruitcake leftism, but the Hollywood powers not only rant, they also make movies, and the movies are entertaining and people pay money to see them. You can criticize the owners and editors of the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post* or the *New Yorker*, but they print material that the public (at least a piece of it) wants to read. It is hard to start a popular newspaper or magazine, or take one over—but it is not impossible, and the idea is not "utopian," and conservatives ought to try, or try harder. They might fail, but they ought to try anyway.

Bill D. Miller points out that my piece attacks intellectuals and not leftists, and I understand his point, but it seems to me that substituting "leftists" for "intellectuals" would have confused things. Intellectuals were handed the reins of power not as leftists but as intellectuals; it made sense for them to run universities, reach prominence in law and public policy, and so forth. The average intellectual is in fact better educated than the average American and is also, chances are, modestly more intelligent. There was nothing irrational (at least in principle) about putting such people in charge.

The interesting question is, once we put them in charge, how were they likely to act? In other contexts, such a question would be absurd; if we put redheads in charge, asking how they would act would make no sense, because redheads as such do not act any particular way. But intellectuals do. There are certain patterns that virtually everyone acknowledges.

It seems to me that those patterns have shaped modern life far more than the Left *per se* has. Of course most intellectuals are leftists, but they are leftists of a particular sort. Compare the leadership of the National Education Association (NEA) with its rank and file; Sol Stern has a fascinating article on this topic in the current *City Journal*. Evidently, the membership is mainly "leftist," as you'd suspect, but in the traditional sense: pro-union, anti-management, pro-government. But the leadership, under the auspices of the intellectualized elite, is leftist in a very different sense. Stern writes that "a 1995 NEA convention resolution calling for programs to give 'accurate portrayals of the roles of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people throughout history,' for example, produced a ferocious backlash within the NEA's own membership. . . ." To call today's mainstream intellectuals mere "leftists" is like calling Dom Perignon mere "sparkling wine."

I am basically in agreement with the other letters (it seems to me that Richard A. Davis's comment on the intensity of hatred directed at the "churches of the lower middle class" is particularly revealing and germane). To those who troubled to compliment the piece or suggest refinements or additions to the thesis: I appreciate it very much.

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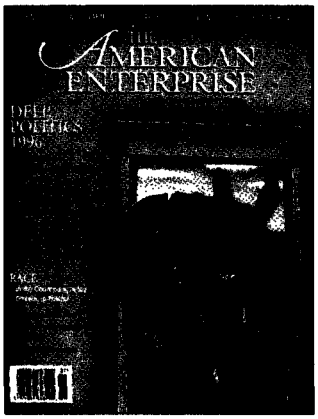

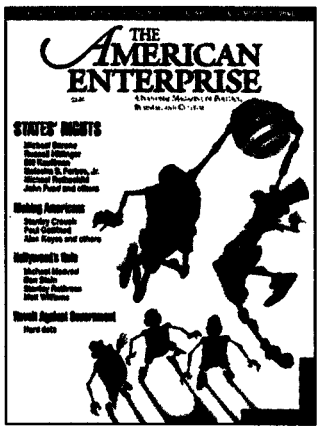

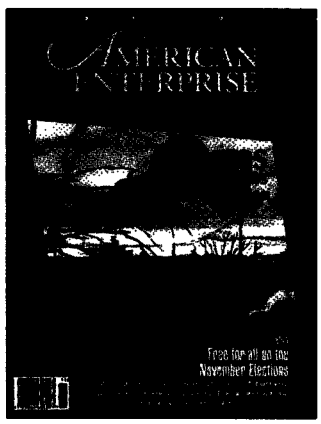

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Affirmative Action

TO THE EDITOR:

I salute Richard E. Morgan for his insightful article, "Republicans for Quotas" [February]. Mr. Morgan has it exactly right. Seldom has the GOP been met with a more agreeable opportunity. Supporting Proposition 209, the California Civil Rights Initiative (CCRI), which prohibits state government from engaging in preferential treatment based on race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin, was the right and principled thing to do. Happily, it was also extremely popular among voters, and, in last November's elections, they approved it.

By backing CCRI, Republican leaders could have had it both ways. Yet most of them ran for the hills. There were, of course, a handful of exceptions. California Republicans like Governor Pete Wilson, Attorney General Dan Lungren, and Congressman Tom Campbell endorsed early and never wavered in their support. Honorable mentions must also go to statehouse Republicans like Jan Goldsmith and Bernie Richter and independent Quentin Kopp. Most of the heavy lifting, however, had to be done by relative political novices.

Yet by comparison, the Democratic party's record was worse than abysmal. Not a single Democratic officeholder endorsed CCRI. Some privately confessed their support, but their party leaders made it clear that this was an issue upon which they would brook no dissent.

I am not a big fan of California's policy of popular initiatives. Many are ill-conceived; most are poorly drafted. When in doubt (which is almost always), I vote "no," and fortunately most of my fellow Californians do likewise. Proposition 209, however, proves the worth of the initiative system. Most members of the California legislature well understood the evils of racial and gender preferences. Nevertheless, they did nothing. They simply did not have the backbone to stand up to the affirmative-action industry. It took the voters of California to lead the way.

GAIL HERIOT
San Diego, California

TO THE EDITOR:

To listen to right-wing Pollyannas, the demise of affirmative action is ineluctable. Some day, somehow, it will magically disappear, with almost no one doing or saying anything. Many believe that California's passage of Proposition 209 by a slim margin of 54 percent to 46 percent signaled the coming end of preference laws and quotas. Others, like Richard E. Morgan, are more realistic.

Not surprisingly, however, Mr. Morgan fails to mention the role of feminism (the primary beneficiaries of quotas and preferences are white females) and immigration in advancing the pestilence of group rights and identity politics. Take CCRI, for example: if white males had been denied the vote in California, CCRI would have lost by a huge margin. In twenty, perhaps even ten, years, the scant 54-percent majority will be gone forever.

In addition to feminism and the expansion of quotas and preferences to include women of all races and socioeconomic classes, massive third-world immigration increases the number of people who benefit from affirmative action and, consequently, enhances the "racial spoils system."

As long as our ruling elites (including white males) are obsessed with statistical "equality"—i.e., proportional representation not only for all races but also for women of all races—quotas will prevail.

Should present trends continue, a tyrannical majority of blacks, Hispanics, other nonwhite minorities, and feminists of all races will control the upper ranks of government, academia, the media, business, etc. Does anyone seriously believe that these groups, once they gain ascendancy, will repeal the laws and policies that have benefited them so greatly?

MICHAEL KUEHL
Kewaunee, Wisconsin

RICHARD E. MORGAN writes:

Gail Heriot is right to call attention to the honorable fight put up for CCRI by Pete Wilson and a handful of other California Republican leaders; the contrast with the national Republican leadership is stark. And Michael Kuehl is certainly right to emphasize the naiveté of those who thought that after the passage of CCRI it would be smooth sailing to the end of affirmative action in America. Nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, the votes were hardly counted last November 5 when lawyers for the American Civil Liberties Union and a coalition of groups opposed to Proposition 209 showed up at the federal courthouse in San Francisco asking that the newly adopted measure be declared void on the grounds it violated the Constitution, and within a month they had a favorable ruling. While this initial ruling has since been overturned by a panel of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, the case is likely to go all the way to the Supreme Court. Until that Court rules, the argument of unconstitutionality will dog opponents of preferences across the country.

Furthermore, it is now clear that the Clinton administration has committed itself to a determined defense of affirmative action. The Justice Department has entered the California case in support of the constitutional arguments against CCRI, and in the works is a White House conference on race relations that will showcase the pressure groups most committed to preferences and allow the President to expand on his theme of "mend it, don't end it."

The opponents of color-blindness lost at the polls in California, but they succeeded in driving support for CCRI down from around 70 percent to 54 percent. More importantly, these groups showed that they could raise substantial amounts of money to defend preferences and recruit prestigious allies from the corporate and academic worlds. They emerged energized, and a lot of hard political work will be necessary to defeat them on a national level.

In this longer-haul fight, feminists are the key; Mr. Kuehl is right about that as well. It is simply the case that if the regime of preferences survives into the next century it will do so because

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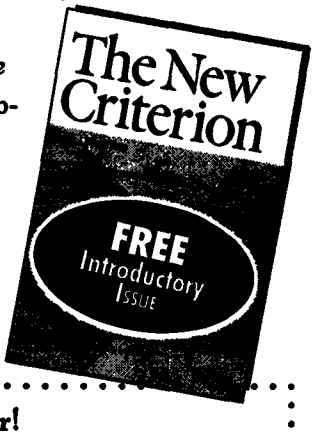

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of the support of American women in thrall to radical feminism. This fact must be faced squarely; it does no good to argue as if affirmative action were only about race.

Where I disagree with Mr. Kuehl (and am therefore somewhat more optimistic) is in respect to immigrants. Of course, it is appalling to see new arrivals immediately qualifying as "protected" minorities. But while some immigrant groups (notably Hispanics) are playing the affirmative-action game with gusto, others (notably Asians) are not. Opposition to preferences is not just a white male thing. White males have wives and mothers and sisters who are less than thrilled at seeing the prospects of their menfolk arbitrarily reduced, and Asians are unlikely to remain politically passive as reverse discrimination bears more and more heavily on them (as it has been doing, for instance, in admission to elite units of the California university system).

Preferences remain extremely unpopular with the American people as a whole. The political task now is to encourage ordinary citizens to trust their better instincts on the question of affirmative action and resist the bullying of entrenched left-wing elites.

Intermarriage

TO THE EDITOR:

Wendy Shalit ["Intermarriage, Inc.," March] is immensely informative about the cultural stresses in intermarriage. May I recommend that the partners in such a marriage read, together, the fundamental texts of both Judaism and Christianity? That is, they should sit down seriously—make time for doing so—and begin with the Torah. Robert Alter's new translation of Genesis would be a good place to start; they will need the annotations throughout that Alter provides. Having completed Genesis, they can go on with the other four books, slowly and in an informed way. Then they can read the four Gospels, Acts, some Paul, also with scholarly annotation.

Among many other things, it would become clear that the narrative between the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament is in many ways a continuity, and that the latter cannot be understood without reference to the former.

This recommendation is not going to appeal to all such couples, obviously. But the question ought to be moved beyond Santas and Hanukkah bushes.

JEFFREY HART
Dartmouth, New Hampshire

TO THE EDITOR:

Congratulations to Wendy Shalit for her perceptive observations on intermarriage. As she points out, attempts to blend Jewish and non-Jewish elements into an intermarriage often create a result which brings grief to the Jewish community as a whole.

One example is the practice of the "breaking of the glass." This Jewish custom symbolizes the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. When observed at an interfaith wedding ceremony, however, a sad irony emerges from the broken glass, at least from the perspective of the Jewish community. At a rite marking the departure of one of the Children of Israel from the fold, the intermarrying couple observes the one Jewish wedding custom designed to subtract from our joy.

ROBERT P. LINDEMAN
Brookline, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR:

The points raised by Wendy Shalit in "Intermarriage, Inc." are well taken. As the author of one of the books she discusses, *There's No Such Thing as a Hanukkah Bush, Sandy Goldstein*, I would like, first, to thank her for her comments on my book. The response I receive always depends on where the speaker is standing. The parents with both feet planted firmly in a Jewish neighborhood, whose children attend religious school or a public school that is predominantly Jewish, are happy to tell me that their children have no desire to celebrate Christmas: for them it is a non-issue. But for others, growing up Jewish in America has quite a different look: it is, for example, the look on the faces of the two little girls in a far western Chicago suburb who whispered to me after I had made a guest appearance at their school that they, too, were Jewish. For them it is impossible not to define Judaism primarily by what it is not. This is especially true at Hanukkah time, when the entire world around them glitters with tree lights and tinsel.

My book was written for them, for my daughter whose young heart longed for a Christmas tree, for my mother who first explained to the eight-year-old me that there was no such thing as a Hanukkah bush.

SUSAN SUSSMAN
Chicago, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR:

In "Intermarriage, Inc." Wendy Shalit provides evidence for the insight of the late philosopher Emmanuel Levinas that

> the national spirit is strongly marked by religious history which, throughout the centuries, has impregnated daily social customs. Jews' entry into the national life of European states has led them to breathe an atmosphere impregnated with Christian essence, which prepares them for the religious life of these states and heralds their conversion.

It warms the cockles of an aging heart to know that Wendy Shalit is out there in the ranks of today's young.

MORRIS GOLDSTEIN
New York City

WENDY SHALIT writes:

I am very grateful for the kind words and insight of Jeffrey Hart, Robert P. Lindeman, Susan Sussman, and Morris Goldstein. I was particularly interested in Mr. Hart's suggestion because I could not make up my mind about it. On the one hand, if every interfaith couple took his advice, clearly intermarriage would be less an occasion for anguish than an opportunity for renewed religious commitment. And yet, if such individuals were that curious about the primary texts of their religion, I cannot help wondering whether they would be likely to intermarry in the first place.

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The Simpson Trial

TO THE EDITOR:

Christopher Caldwell ["Johnnie Cochran's Secret," March] is partially right. O.J. Simpson is almost certainly guilty, and race was a central consideration in his criminal trial. However, Mr. Caldwell is wrong in asserting that it was the defense which raised the race issue.

In a normal homicide prosecution, the case would have been filed and prosecuted in the predominantly white West District in Santa Monica, the same district where the Simpson civil case was heard. It was the prosecution which first made race an issue when it decided, at the very outset of the case and for reasons entirely unrelated to winning the trial, to prosecute Simpson in the predominantly black Central District. This decision was made with racial politics in mind: in the post-Rodney King era, the prosecution did not want a white jury. Thus, it was not the defense but the prosecution which guaranteed that the jury would, as Mr. Caldwell says, "wind up virtually all-poor and all-black."

To bring up another point: I am a bit tired of hearing how the prosecution has fewer rights than the defense in jury selection. Both sides get the same number of peremptory challenges. The rule established in *People* v. *Wheeler* applies to *both* the defense and the prosecution (see *Georgia* v. *McCollum* [1992] and *People* v. *Pagel* [1986]).

The remedy for a *Wheeler* violation (purging a racial group from the jury) is to call a new panel and pick a new jury. If the prosecution could have shown such a violation by the defense, it could also have made the appropriate motion and asked for a new panel. If the prosecution was racially handicapped in jury selection, it was as a direct consequence of its own decision to prosecute in a heavily black district.

Finally, Mr. Caldwell does Barry Scheck a disservice. He claims that Scheck and Peter Neufeld, the other so-called "DNA lawyer" on the Simpson defense team,

> constructed a frame-up they knew did not occur, implied racism where they knew it did not exist, and . . . undermined confidence in a branch of forensic science whose trustworthiness they had spent their careers establishing.

And he then quotes Barry Scheck's closing words to the jury:

> You must distrust [DNA] evidence. . . . You cannot render a verdict in this case beyond a reasonable doubt on this kind of evidence. Because if you do, no one is safe, no one.

In fact, Scheck exhaustively and effectively attacked the deficiencies in the physical evidence and argued honorably. I myself have used, to good effect, words almost identical to the ones Mr. Caldwell quotes, and I have done so representing white defendants in front of white juries.

MICHAEL LUKEHART
Kern County Public Defender
Bakersfield, California

TO THE EDITOR:

When the verdict in the O.J. Simpson criminal trial was returned, it hit the American public (white America, anyway) like a brick on the head. And in that moment of jaw-dropping disbelief it was crystal clear what had happened: an overwhelmingly black jury, sold on fanciful theories of racial conspiracy and ignoring incontrovertible evidence of guilt, acquitted a murderer.

As horrified and angered as I was by the verdict, I felt that at least this event would finally put into stark relief the undeniably different worlds in which much of black and white society live and that those differences could finally be openly and seriously discussed. But no sooner had the verdict been returned than the popular media began to put a sanitized, politically-correct spin on why Simpson got away

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with murder. In the media's self-proclaimed mission to "heal the racial divide," a new culprit for the acquittal had to be found. With the help of legal vulgarians like Leslie Abramson and other "experts," we soon learned that it was the failure of the prosecution team that was to blame.

But all this is so much Monday-morning quarterbacking. The prosecution team made mistakes, no doubt (not least of which was caving in to pressure and not taking the case to Simi Valley). But prosecuting a case, as I know from a career as both a prosecutor and defense attorney, is a lot like what psychologists say about parenting: you don't have to be perfect, just good enough. And the prosecution team was good enough; it got mountains of damning evidence before the jury, including DNA evidence which, standing alone, established guilt beyond any doubt.

But as Christopher Caldwell so aptly points out in his article, once the issue of race entered the courtroom and was accepted as legitimate by all, the verdict was sealed. And no amount of prosecutorial wizardry could have changed that.

EVAN J. WINER
Chicago, Illinois

CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL writes:

Except for his assertion that the prosecution could have, or should have, obtained a change of venue to Simi Valley, Evan J. Winer's letter strikes me as right in every particular. Michael Lukehart, on the other hand, asserts that I was wrong in saying that it was the defense which brought race into the Simpson trial.

I agree with both Messrs. Winer and Lukehart that Simpson should have been tried in Santa Monica (where the crime was committed) rather than in downtown Los Angeles (where he was in fact tried). And there is little doubt that Los Angeles district attorney Gil Garcetti benefited from the perception that he was willing—even *keen*—to have the case tried in front of a black jury. Garcetti in fact won reelection last fall by a razor-thin margin, thanks to an overwhelming majority of the black vote. But in *The Run of His Life*, Jeffrey Toobin holds that there were insurmountable logistical obstacles to holding the trial in Santa Monica. Since Toobin examined the specific matter of venue selection more closely than any other journalist at the Simpson trial, I consider him authoritative on the matter.

I did not hold that *People* v. *Wheeler* gives more rights to the defense than to the prosecution, as Mr. Lukehart claims. It is indisputable, however, that *Wheeler* has in practice been more useful to those who would stack a jury with blacks than to those who would stack a jury with whites.

As for Barry Scheck's closing statement, it is not the words themselves that are objectionable, but the fact that they bear no relation to the evidence.

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Franz Schubert

TO THE EDITOR:

Bravo to Terry Teachout for "Schubert Lives" [March], in which, on the occasion of Franz Schubert's 200th birthday, he elegantly and accurately explores the composer's great art. Mr. Teachout is a worthy successor in COMMENTARY's pages to Samuel Lipman, whose death was such a great loss.

I find it inexplicable, however, that in Mr. Teachout's otherwise excellent discography at the end of the piece, he does not mention any of Schubert's magnificent choral works. Let me suggest, among the most worthy, Mass No. 2 and Mass No. 6 by Robert Shaw and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Choruses, with Dawn Upshaw and Benita Valente (Telarc CD-80212) and Songs for Male Chorus, Shaw again, with the Robert Shaw Chamber Singers (Telarc CD-80340).

CLAYTON H. FARNHAM
Atlanta, Georgia

TERRY TEACHOUT writes:

Apologies—both the CD's that Clayton H. Farnham mentions were actually on my list, but got dropped at the last minute, purely for reasons of space. And many thanks to Mr. Farnham for his kind words.

The West

TO THE EDITOR:

In his review of Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* [Books in Review, March], Richard Pipes criticizes Huntington for failing to list private property, with its corollaries of political freedom and economic growth, as the *sine qua non* of Western civilization. This is an economic

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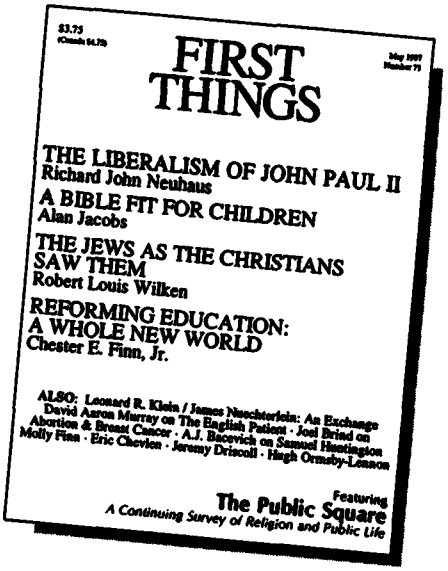
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determinism that is as unpalatable as the Marxism against which Mr. Pipes has so ably argued in COMMENTARY and elsewhere. Huntington clearly sees these attributes as derivative rather than essential to Western culture. But he goes wrong when he tries to define Western civilization by listing its characteristics rather than by explaining its cultural base. His list is inevitably incomplete, and thus he opens himself up to Mr. Pipes's charge. Actually, Huntington is on to something quite important: religion, morality, and ethics are at the foundation of civilization.

For the West, what is essential is the Judeo-Christian tradition. As long as it is vital, the West will grow. To the extent that the West pulls away from its religious-moral base, to the extent that it secularizes, it opens itself up to disorder, to the growth of ideologies like Nazism and Communism.

Mr. Pipes is probably right in believing that the West will spread, but he is wrong in seeing this growth as virtually unstoppable and in believing that non-Western elites are resisting it simply because their power is being put in jeopardy. Huntington is right in predicting future clashes where the major civilizations rub up against the West. These are the result in part of what Mr. Pipes describes as the elite's fear of losing power but in greater part of a reaction to Western secularization. Both Messrs. Pipes and Huntington fail to see that secularization itself will bring confusion and disorder within Western civilization and sow the same seeds of destruction that brought on two world wars in this century.

Variations of Communism and Nazism are again appearing as various societies, torn from their traditional cultural values and adrift in a world which prizes power and money, seek an escape from poverty and insecurity and demand equal access to the privileged life of the developed nations. A secular international order, one devoid of common values that truly unite people, has no staying power.

DENNIS J. DUNN
Southwest Texas State University
San Marcos, Texas

RICHARD PIPES writes:

Dennis J. Dunn considers my stress on private property and its corollaries to be "economic determinism." I hardly think so. The term "property" as defined in the West since the Middle Ages, but especially since the 17th century, has meant not merely ownership of physical objects but the preservation of life and respect for liberties and civil rights. It is what distinguishes Western civilization from all other civilizations.

In any event, this view is not incompatible with stress on the importance to the West of Jewish and Christian traditions. Both religions teach respect for property: the Eighth Commandment against stealing is certainly an emphatic assertion of this principle.

Finally, I doubt that secularism causes wars, as Mr. Dunn maintains: history is filled with incidents of bloody conflict over religion.

Conservatives

TO THE EDITOR:

The COMMENTARY symposium "On the Future of Conservatism" [February] proved to be excellent reading, but, unlike the other contributors, Irwin M. Stelzer was not content with setting forth the intellectual merits of his case. In responding to the remarks of Father Richard John Neuhaus, the editor of *First Things*, in that magazine's symposium, Mr. Stelzer had to engage in making anti-Catholic remarks to sustain his position. His statement that Jewish neoconservatives should have known better than to "pitch an intellectual tent broad enough" to include "many Catholics brought up in a tradition that does not welcome dissent from its revealed truths" smacks of an animus against Catholics that Arthur Schlesinger, Sr. once said was America's "deepest bias."

Mr. Stelzer is right, of course, to suggest that certain teachings of the Catholic Church are not dependent on a referendum for validation, but he is wrong to phrase his words in a manner that is downright disparaging of Catholicism.

Even worse is his comment that Jewish intellectuals "should not expect to be partners in a governing theocracy" with Catholics. Precisely whom is he speaking about? Can he name even one Catholic who has proposed a governing theocracy?

This is pure, unadulterated bigotry.

WILLIAM A. DONOHUE
President, Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Irwin M. Stelzer's asseveration that Catholicism is a "tradition that does not welcome dissent from its revealed truths" needs to be addressed. Roman Catholics share a profound tradition of faith and reason, a shared understanding of natural inquiry, and a shared conception of first principles, but this tradition is revealed through active engagement and critical debate. After all, St. Thomas Aquinas began his philosophical project to reconcile Aristotelian thought with Catholic tradition as a dissenter. More recently, the late John Courtney Murray, S.J., the theologian who did the most to articulate an accommodation between the Church and modern democracy, initially began his work as a dissenter. Anyway, before accusations are hurled as to which tradition has the better record on accepting dissent, let us not forget the troubles that Spinoza incurred in the Jewish community of 17th-century Amsterdam.

Mr. Stelzer also raises a larger issue concerning the market's ability to address the major social problems confronting American democracy today. Is it grounds for excommunication from the ranks of conservatism to suggest that the market contributes significantly to the cultural decay evident in the breakdown of traditional family, communities, and moral values?

Clearly, the entertainment industry has served to undermine those values necessary for a healthy society to function properly. Of course, consumers who are outraged by movies that depict priests as womanizers or records that espouse vi-

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olence against white police officers and women can boycott these products. But without a shared sense of community based on an agreed-upon morality, how effective can any boycott be under the onslaught of what is being spewed forth today as entertainment? Will downsizing government and giving tax breaks to the middle class restore a moral order in America?

These kinds of questions need to be asked by libertarian conservatives and traditionalists alike.

DONALD T. CRITCHLOW
Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars
Washington, D.C.

IRWIN M. STELZER writes:

I regret that William A. Donohue found my remarks in COMMENTARY's symposium "anti-Catholic" and "bigoted." What I said was that many Catholics do not welcome dissent from what they deem to be "revealed truths"; Mr. Donohue says that "certain teachings of the Catholic Church are not dependent on a referendum for validation." I am happy to accept his formulation. But if—and I emphasize the *if*—his is meant to be a political statement as well as a theological one, it confirms me in my uneasiness.

Recall: my quarrel was not with Catholics in general, but with the editorial statement that introduced the symposium in *First Things* and that cited papal encyclicals as if they were the final authority for all Americans, or as if the principles enunciated in those encyclicals should determine the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the American "regime." To me at least, this seems to suggest a theocratic view of the polity.

It is precisely this attitude that makes me fear an alliance between neoconservatives and *First Things*—or any group that would place its views beyond the reach of democratic debate. The notion that a "regime" becomes illegitimate if it adopts a position that, although supported by a majority of voters, is offensive to the teachings of one or another religious group is one I find scary.

I share the nervousness of Robert H. Bork and others about the dangers inherent in a hyperactive judiciary. But the solution to this problem surely lies either in democratically approved constitutional changes to reduce the power of the judiciary or, as William Kristol has suggested, in persuading a majority of duly elected legislators to be more vigorous in their opposition to the confirmation of judges who hold views of which they disapprove.

Donald T. Critchlow also brings up the question of dissent. In citing the case of Spinoza, he means, I assume, to point out that Jews have also had difficulty accepting dissent within their community. But as I know of no source of data that would permit me to compare the number of Catholic excommunicants with their Jewish equivalents, I leave it to the reader to decide which tradition

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has the better record in this regard.

The more interesting issue raised by Mr. Critchlow relates to what he terms "the market's ability to address the major social problems confronting American democracy today." He concedes that consumers who find certain television programs, records, and films offensive are free to boycott them. But that, he says, may not be enough. Well, what then? Should others, who have different preferences, be denied access to these products? Should *they* be made to march to the beat of someone else's drummer?

For Mr. Critchlow, a market-determined result—one that is produced by the accumulated preferences of consumers exercising free choice—that does not comport with an "agreed-upon morality" is problematic. Will we be asked next to deny seats to duly elected representatives who refuse to swear to support that "agreed-upon morality"?

No. Tax cuts cannot restore the old morality. But neither can central control of what goes out over the airwaves. Only personal responsibility, revived in ways suggested by Charles Murray, among others, can do that.

To the Editor:

In your symposium, Walter Berns's comments on conservatism include so many questionable statements that it may be useful to call attention to at least some of them. He begins by characterizing Russell Kirk as the "doyen of the paleoconservatives" and thereby creates the impression that whatever view he attributes to Kirk is typical of all paleoconservatives. As the inventor of this term, I find that Mr. Berns does not know to whom or what it refers. Most paleos—e.g., Sam Francis, Tom Fleming, Lew Rockwell, and Allan Carlson—have studied the social sciences and other modern disciplines. They are not Anglo-Catholic traditionalists at war with the post-medieval world. Their complaint with the current American regime is not its failure to instantiate a "Christian commonwealth," but its lack of constitutionality.

Mr. Berns gratuitously compares Father Richard John Neuhaus to those "self-righteous zealots" who impose their social policies through the courts. This comparison is misleading for two reasons.

One, there is nothing that Mr. Berns cites—or can cite—from Neuhaus's editorial remarks in *First Things* to prove that he is a "self-righteous zealot." Neuhaus never denies—and indeed affirms—that the American federal union was intended to be religiously pluralistic. But Neuhaus and his co-symposiasts also maintain (as Mr. Berns too admits at the end of his polemic) that the Founders assumed that a moral consensus would prevail in the new republic. They did not suspect that American courts would one day declare war on what had been the common moral ground of Americans whatever their denominational differences.

Two, the comparison between Neuhaus and the usurping judges overlooks a disproportion in power. While Neuhaus and company simply express their opinions, the judges, by contrast, are free to legislate and to overrule legislatures and referenda.

Mr. Berns fears that by making too much of these annoyances, we may be setting ourselves up for "some type of fascism." As he warned during an interview with *Insight* magazine (February 3, 1997), a rightist dictatorship may be "the only alternative" unless we see ourselves as the "best regime." Putting aside this alarmist speculation and the naive belief that today's "best regime" would be recognizable as such to the Founders, the problem still remains of his misrepresentation of the protest expressed in *First Things*.

The *First Things* symposiasts, as far as I can tell, deplore not religious pluralism or natural rights or (unlike myself) the constitutional revolution carried out by the New Deal. They are complaining about the judicial assaults in recent decades on traditional family and communal life. Some who are especially outraged discuss the possibility of private disobedience in response to this development. By no means a call to violent upheaval, such musings seem far more modest than the organized disobedience that both Richard John Neuhaus and Walter Berns himself condoned during the civil-rights agitation of the 50's and 60's.

Paul Gottfried
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

To the Editor:

In his contribution to the "On the Future of Conservatism" symposium, Walter Berns insults the late Russell Kirk and then attributes positions to him that Kirk never professed. As one of Kirk's former research assistants who spent many hours with him and who is now completing a book on his political thought, I must respond to Mr. Berns's unfair allegations.

Mr. Berns implies that Kirk was an anti-Semite because of a single incident. According to Mr. Berns, while Kirk was outlining his "plan for a Christian commonwealth" during a panel discussion, Mr. Berns abruptly interrupted his co-panelist to ask, "What are you going to do with us Jews?" Allegedly, the question

> took him aback, first because he knew I was not Jewish, but most of all, I suspect, because it never occurred to him to ask it, or to have to answer it. After a short pause, he mumbled something to the effect that, of course, he did not mean to exclude Jews or anyone else.

I doubt that Mr. Berns has accurately described this incident. Kirk would not have responded so defensively and awkwardly, since he had frequently written about the Hebraic influences on the Western and American political tradition. Read, for example, his *Roots of American Order* (1974), in which he devotes an entire chapter to an examination of the Jewish impact on the American political order. "In both its Christian and Jewish forms," Kirk wrote, "the order of Sinai still gives vitality to America."

Nothing in my personal relationship with Kirk would lend any credence to Mr. Berns's charge and nothing I have read in his writings would indicate that he disliked Jews.

Mr. Berns further alleges that Kirk claimed that "John

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Locke had nothing to do with the Constitution." This is untrue. Kirk maintained that the Lockean influences on the Constitution had been *exaggerated* by the scholars Louis Hartz and Richard Hofstadter. Such historians, according to Kirk, ignored the King James Bible, the Book of Common Prayer, the British constitutional tradition, and the common-law tradition and its interpreters.

W. WESLEY MCDONALD
Elizabethtown College
Elizabethtown,
Pennsylvania

WALTER BERNS writes:

Paul Gottfried claims to have coined the term "paleo-conservative." Well, good for him, but so far as I know, he hasn't patented it.

He also artfully garbles my statement (made in a telephone interview) about the danger posed by talk of revolution. Let me quote it in full:

"I'm not angry that they [the *First Things* symposiasts] raised 'regime questions,'" Berns explained to *Insight*. "I'm angry that they raised the possibility of civil disobedience and revolution. If ours is not the best regime, you have to consider the real alternatives. And since Communism has bitten the dust, the only alternative is some type of fascism. You always have to be on the alert about that."

I should like to have edited that statement before it was printed, but I think its meaning is clear enough, and rather at variance with Paul Gottfried's dissembling version of it.

In reply to W. Wesley McDonald, who says I am unfair to Russell Kirk: I did not imply that Kirk was an anti-Semite; I implied that he did not understand what he was saying when he suggested that the United States was, or was intended to be, a Christian commonwealth.

As to the *Roots of American Order* which, for my sins, I once read, I shall simply say that Kirk did not understand the provenance of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, with its separation of church and state.

Gay Rights

TO THE EDITOR:

I write in response to Norman Podhoretz's "How the Gay-Rights Movement Won" [November 1996] and the correspondence on the article in the March issue.

My youngest son died of AIDS one year ago at the age of twenty-six. No child was more loved or better cared for, by parents and siblings, until the terrible end.

I recall, as a boy, walking with my Communist party (CP, now PC) father in Greenwich Village and passing a group of flaming homosexuals (rare in those days). "When we have socialism, those vermin will be exterminated!," he in-

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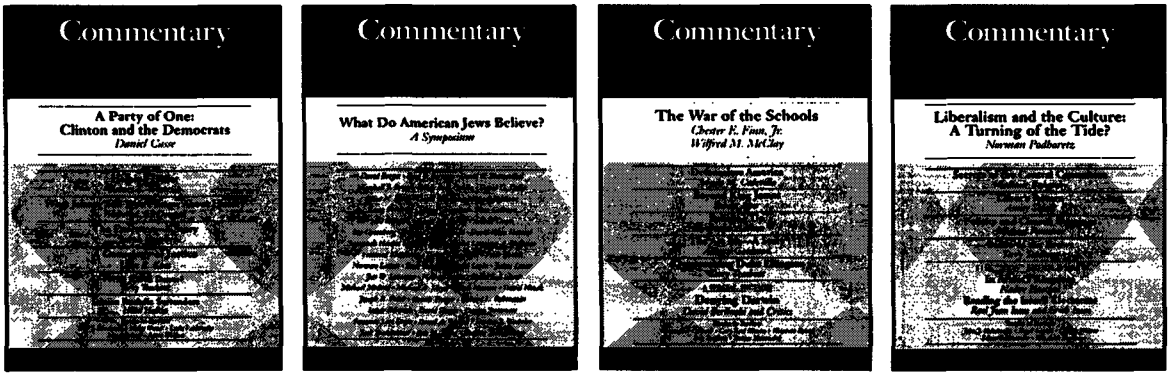

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toned, a sentiment he usually reserved for Trotskyites. Now he displays a red ribbon on his front door with the pride of someone who lost his grandson in the battle of Stalingrad. The party line has indeed changed. And ironically, the terrible deed is being done by the same party with its line reversed. The dead, dying, and doomed already outnumber the combined fatalities from all the wars the U.S. has fought. And that number is understated as well as growing rapidly.

HIV is an affirmative-action virus. No other contagion has a right to privacy. Without mandatory testing there is no way to track the virus, much less stop it. Clusters go undetected for years. Many of my son's friends still are in an untested state of denial, although some have already had lovers who died of AIDS. The gays' political clout in San Francisco is matched only by their immaturity, to which the Left has cynically catered.

The accusation "homophobe" has lost its cutting edge from overuse. Is there anyone who would rather attend his son's funeral than his son's wedding? And how much longer must we listen to the hype that education and tolerance will defeat AIDS? Is any community more knowledgeable about AIDS, hipper about sex, and more tolerant of everything imaginable than the homosexual community at the epicenter of the plague?

The gay establishment pretends that no territory exists between persecution and celebration; that criticism of the gay "life-style" is an effort to drive gays back to the closet. For the sake of argument let us imagine a worst-case (and almost unimaginable) scenario: that the U.S. reverted to the homophobia of the 50's. How many homosexuals were actually killed because of their homosexuality? Probably not more than were killed because they were Communists, which was perhaps a few more than were eaten by mountain lions. How does that compare with the casualties of our own era?

I can imagine a backlash from the growing awareness that AIDS is slowly entrenching itself within the sexual mainstream of the straight world. Gays should be at the forefront of a campaign for mandatory testing, closing bathhouses, and abolishing propaganda advocating promiscuity. I do not expect this to happen. The self-destructive, by definition, are not moved by self-interest.

ROBERT TRUPIN
Comptche, California

TO THE EDITOR:

Norman Podhoretz was most gracious in his response to my letter on homosexual pedophilia. He agreed with me that homosexual pedophilia ". . . remains the beneficiary of a [liberal] tolerance that is not (at least not yet!) extended as widely or as readily to the molestation of girls by men." Things now appear to be worse than we both thought.

On March 17, Ben Brantley, the chief theater critic of the *New York Times*, wrote a rave review of Paula Vogel's play, *How I Learned to Drive*. The piece was headlined "A Pedophile Even a Mother Could Love," an accurate summary of the tone and content of the review of a play which revolves around a man in his thirties, a bisexual molester of an eleven-year-old girl and an even younger boy. This man, the girl's uncle by marriage, is described by Brantley as particularly sensitive and empathic in regard to the emotional needs, frustrations, and family deficiencies of these children. Brantley sees the uncle's sexual seductions of the girl, which start at age eleven and continue through her late adolescence, as ". . . in some appalling way, a real love story."

New York magazine reports that the play, which it calls "the season's funniest portrait of a child molester," received "rapturous" reviews and that Paula Vogel has "broken out of cult status into broader popular and literary acceptance." Indeed, just last month *How I Learned to Drive* won the New York Drama Critics Circle award as the best new play of the 1996-1997 theater season.

There are other indications of growing tolerance and rationalizations for homosexual *and* heterosexual child abuse, often encased in the armor of ideological abstractions, e.g., "It's part of life." This attitude is to be found particularly among certain academic, artistic, intellectual, and media types. It is related to what Daniel P. Moynihan has called "defining deviancy down" in the prevailing liberal culture. Mr. Podhoretz has analyzed this phenomenon again in his masterful essay, "'Lolita,' My Mother-in-Law, the Marquis de Sade, and Larry Flynt," in the April COMMENTARY.

PAUL WALLER
New York City

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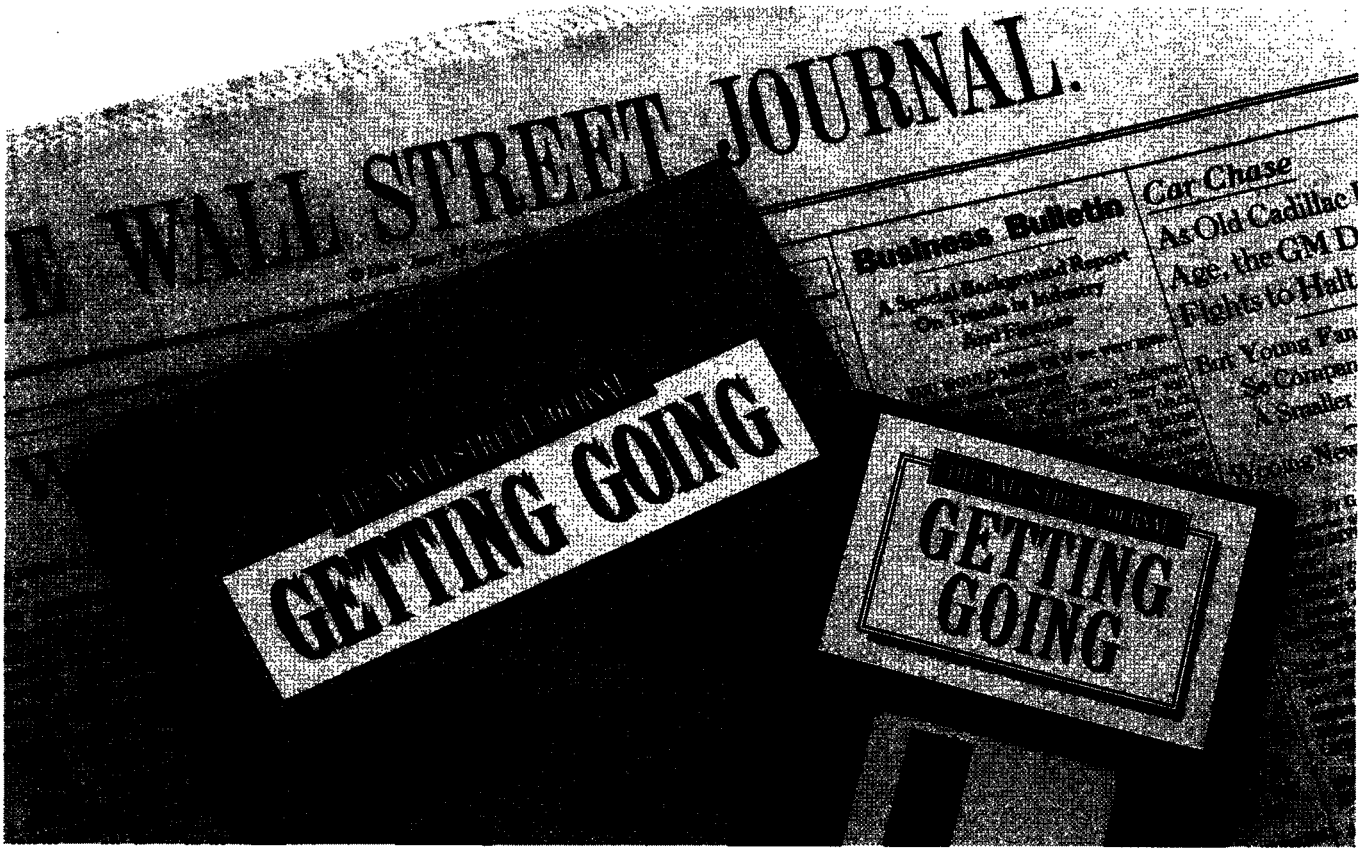

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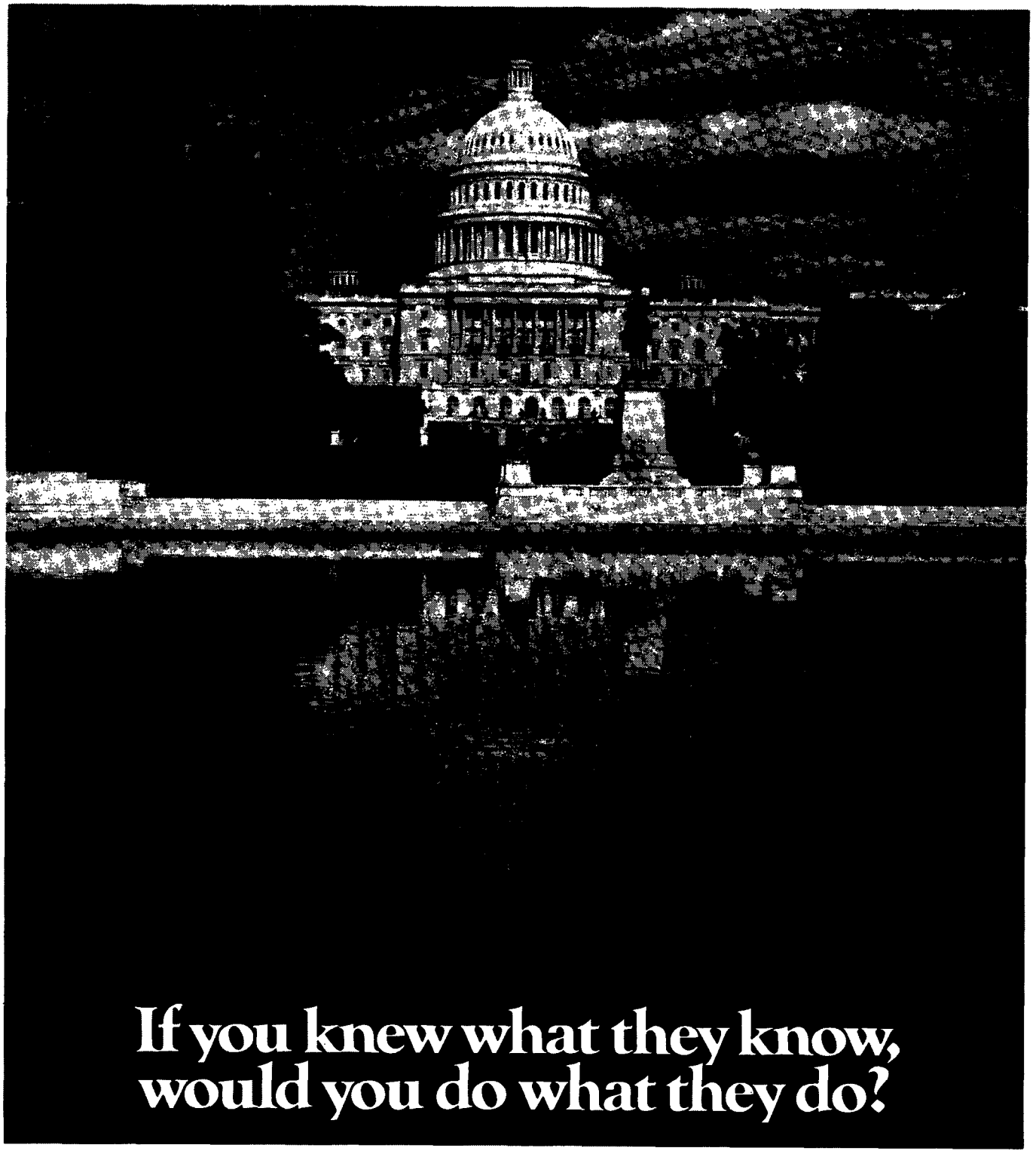

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Commentary
June 1997

After Zionism
Reflections on Israel and the Diaspora

Hillel Halkin

ALMOST EXACTLY 100 years ago, in August 1897, Theodor Herzl stepped out on the platform of the Municipal Casino in Basel, Switzerland, to launch the First Zionist Congress and the Zionist movement whose centenary is being marked this year. A year earlier, Herzl had published his *Der Judenstaat* ("The Jewish State"), in which he argued that anti-Semitism in the Diaspora could be eradicated only with the eradication of the Diaspora itself.

And exactly twenty years ago, I published a book called *Letters to an American Jewish Friend: A Zionist's Polemic*. Since this is something of a personal essay, I will begin with that.

I did not write the book hoping for a large audience; I wrote it because I needed to say something, though I knew it would seem foolish to most readers. This was that, even if anti-Semitism was no longer a salient concern for most Diaspora Jews, the radical Zionist critique of their existence that Herzl had helped to formulate was correct. With the establishment of a Jewish state, Diaspora life had lost its justification. For the Jew who took his Jewishness seriously, there was no alternative to Israel.

To my surprise, the book was reviewed and read widely.* No doubt because it was composed in letter form, it inspired letters in return. Within a year or two of its publication, I received over 100 of these. Long afterward, they were still arriving in smaller numbers. Many were argumentative and indignant; some ran to five or ten pages. There were also lecture tours of America, invitations to speak, requests to participate on panels and in conferences. As such things go, it was small-time—yet for a while it seemed that I had started a discussion that was taking on a life of its own.

Sic fugit. Not long ago, I received the last of the letters prompted by *Letters to an American Jewish Friend*. It came from the publisher and informed me that the book was going out of print. There were a few dozen copies left and I could buy as many as I liked at a discount.

I did not bother to reply. A friend asked if I intended to look for another publisher to reissue the book. I said that I did not. He asked if I no longer believed what I had written there.

No, I said. I still believed it. I just did not think it mattered any more.

"To you?"

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* See Robert Alter, "New York and/or Jerusalem," COMMENTARY, August 1977—ED.

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"To anyone."
"How do you mean?" he asked.
Let me try to explain.

THE BOOK that I wrote was, in its way, outrageous. Although I had grown up in a Zionist home in New York, it had a convert's zeal and a convert's intolerance. In 1977, I had been living in Israel for seven years, and the fervor of the decision to do so had not yet waned. And yet there must have been lingering doubts. Why else would I insist on turning what I had done into a Jewish categorical imperative?

The times had something to do with it, too. It was the period between the Yom Kippur War of 1973 and Anwar al-Sadat's peace initiative. After the triumphant years following the Six-Day War of 1967, the country was feeling battered and under siege. Immigration had stopped. Israelis were anguished and angry. Like most men my age, I was doing long stretches in the army. And back in America, Jews were going about their business.

It was an emotional book. But it also aspired to be a closely reasoned one. It was this combination, I suppose, that drew readers into it.

It began with an introductory chapter, the first of six letters to an imaginary friend. A composite profile of several real American Jewish friends, he was an academic by profession; well-educated and committed as a Jew; semi-traditional in religious practice; liberal-minded in his politics and cultural attitudes; confident about the future of American Jewry; sympathetic to Israel but critical of its policies; and not in the least inclined to consider living there.

It was this last fact, I observed to him, that introduced a tension into our relationship, because Israel was less an ordinary country than a "community of faith" whose credo was that all Jews belonged in it. The letters that followed were, as it were, this faith's rational demonstration.

The second letter started with an analysis of Jewish population trends in the United States. Extrapolating from studies done in the late 1960's and early 70's, I argued that the broad middle, the children of millions of Jewishly uneducated or partially educated "ethnic Jews," was about to vanish from the community. As Zionism had always predicted, Diaspora Jewry in modern times would be decimated, if not by anti-Semitism, then by assimilation. Demographically, Israel alone would grow while the rest of the Jewish world shrank.

In "Letters Three and Four," my friend fought back. Even if my demographic predictions were correct, he wrote, a smaller Diaspora was a Jewish necessity, delegated with preserving and developing Jewish values—for example, by fostering a Jewish ethical tradition that could not flourish in an Israel born and maintained by the coercive use of state power; or by being the soil for the cross-fertilization of Jewish and Gentile cultures that was the key to Jewish creativity; or by renewing Judaism spiritually—once again impossible in Israel because of the Orthodox stranglehold on religion there. The Diaspora and Israel were two poles of Jewish existence that would always be complementary.

I proceeded to argue with each of these propositions. I tried to show him that they were illogical, rationalizations. Ethics meant the assumption of responsibility; how could a Diaspora that eschewed the responsibilities of Jewish independence have a Jewish ethical mission? Jewish cultural creativity presupposed a Jewish culture; the Diaspora no longer had one. And since Orthodoxy was the only genuine form of Jewish *religious* expression, it was the only one likely to endure in America, too. Only in Israel was there any possibility of a secular Jewish culture, the one authentic Jewish response to modernity.

The book's last letter dealt with Israel's political future. It argued that even if peace with the Arabs were achieved, this would necessarily remain tenuous; that any Palestinian state would be irredentist; that a high Arab birth rate would cause the demographic balance between Jews and Arabs in Israel to be precarious; and that Israel would continue to need as many Jews as it could get in order to help it survive. Therefore, it was the one logical place for a serious Jew to be.

Quod erat demonstrandum.

IN THE years that followed, I read many books, Herzl's too, that I might profitably have read earlier. And as I did, *Letters to an American Jewish Friend* began to seem to me a rather passionate exercise in reinventing the wheel. There was not a point in it that could not be found in the Zionist literature of the past; no argument rebutted by it that was not timeworn, too; nothing that had not been debated since Herzl's time. Even its epistolary form had been used by Moses Hess in his *Rome and Jerusalem*, the first modern Zionist manifesto, published in 1862. An exercise in futility!

Not that I had expected American Jews to read it and pack their bags. Indeed, I felt not only gratified but somewhat unnerved when, over the years, letters would sometimes arrive bearing Israeli post-

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marks and informing me that I had been a factor in their senders' moving to Israel. As if I didn't have enough on my head!

But I *had* hoped to put the subject of Zionism, as a serious critique of contemporary Jewish life, back on the American Jewish intellectual agenda from which it had disappeared. And this, I came to realize, was thoroughly quixotic.

Some things are beyond rational argument. There are deeper forces at work.

That is certainly true of Zionism itself. The rationales and ideological justifications given for it in the last 100 years have been innumerable and often contradictory: Zionism as an affirmation of Jewish history, Zionism as a revolt against Jewish history, Zionism as a cure for anti-Semitism, Zionism as a bourgeois Jewish utopia, Zionism as the fulfillment of biblical prophecy, Zionism as the Jewish contribution to the world socialist revolution, Zionism as Jewish *Blut-und-Boden*, Zionism as a philanthropic rescue mission, Zionism as a messianic theodicy. The remarkable thing is that, for the most part, the holders of these different views were able to cooperate and work together in practical matters. But that, as far as I could see, was only because they were all serving the same master: Zionism as the Jewish will to live honorably in our times.

But the Diaspora had a will to live, too. And it, too, had given, and would go on giving, innumerable and contradictory rationales for its existence. What Hitler could not convince it of—what the entire horrendous and inspiring history of the Jewish people in the 20th century could not convince it of—no book or library of books was going to convince it of.

The issue was not debatable. The will to live never runs out of arguments. And so, after a while, I began to change the subject, and my American Jewish friends found me more pleasant company.

I WAS not alone. If the years before and after *Letters to an American Jewish Friend* was written marked the final realization on both sides that, barring catastrophe, the Diaspora would stay where it was, this realization, in turn, helped end the Zionist era in Israel itself. Or to put it another way, if Zionism was the failed world revolution of the Jewish people, the Diaspora was the counterrevolution; already by the 1970's, far more Israelis were living in America than American Jews in Israel.

Yet one cannot blame just the inertia or even the pull of the Diaspora for the death of Zionism as a motivating force in Israeli life—any more than one can credit the arrival in Israel of a half-million Russian Jews in the early 90's to a Zionist revival. For all its uniqueness, Zionism was but one of the revolutionary ideologies that marched across the stage of modern history; and when, for the first time since the French Revolution, all the other grand causes made their exit, it could not have been expected that Zionism, like an actor who has missed his cue, would remain behind by itself.

Besides, Israelis were weary—just how weary, I failed to realize during my first years of living among them. I was full of new beginnings; they, of war, tension, and economic sacrifice. It was no accident that "post-Zionism," both as a mood and as a political outlook, caught on first among a secular, Ashkenazi elite that had borne the brunt of Israel's struggle for two or more generations, and spread more slowly among those who came to Zionist activism and to Israel later, such as religious Jews and immigrants from Muslim countries. And although Zionism (often in a heavily theologized form) may still live on intensely among some of these elements, and particularly among settlers in the Territories, there too it seems doomed to expire—one can only hope not too tragically—with the passage of time and the advances of the peace process.

I was a first-generation Israeli. It took a second fully to open my eyes. For my two daughters, who were one and four years old when *Letters to an American Jewish Friend* was published, Zionism never had the slightest personal relevance.

IN SOME ways, then, the first letter of my book, with its ecclesiastical metaphor of Zionist faith, strikes me today as undiscerning. But the second, on the disappearing Diaspora, is a different matter; for though nothing may date faster than statistics, those of the 1990's bear out my conclusions far better than did those of the 1970's. When the book first appeared, it was widely criticized for being alarmist. Now the alarm bells are being rung by everyone. One American Jewish sociologist, who regularly turned up for years on the same panels that I did, used to argue that intermarriage was an asset to American Jews, since it increased their numbers via conversions. The last I heard, he considers it a demographic disaster.

True, I missed some things here, too: for one, just how rapid would be the growth of ultra-Orthodoxy, the product of an extremely high birth rate and a low rate of defection to the outside world. If this trend continues, traditional Judaism, particularly its far-right wing, a small portion of the American Jewish community two decades ago, will soon be a major part of it. Few

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non-Orthodox American Jews seem to be thinking seriously even now about what this portends, although it is entirely consistent with what I predicted in general.

I also failed to take into account the splintering of American Jewry as the center fell out of it. I wrote at a time when one could speak of Orthodox Jews, Conservative Jews, Reform Jews, and nonaffiliated Jews, plus a few minor variants. My imaginary correspondent was active in what was known as the *havurah* movement, a blend of the Conservative summer camp, the traditional Jewish prayer-and-study *minyan*, and the communalism of the counterculture of the 1960's and 70's.

Today in America there are gay Jews, feminist Jews, humanist Jews, eco-Jews, Jews for Jesus, Jews for Buddha, patrilineal Jews, unconverted Gentile Jews, and hyphenated Jews of all kinds, including half-Jews, quarter-Jews, and eighth-Jews who consider themselves semi-Jews or full Jews. And that is only to speak of those who still regard themselves as Jews at all.

The fewer Jews, the more sects of them. Not since Hellenistic times, when rabbinic Judaism battled to assert its authority over a wild array of Jewish gnostics, Jewish Christians, and Jewish pagans, has there been such a proliferation of competing Jewish identities having no confessional, social, biological, or other common denominator.

Even the "civil religion" centered on Israel—to invoke a phrase widely used in the 1970's to describe the one tenet shared by nearly all American Jews—has lost its congregation. Nor did it take Israeli-style post-Zionism for this to happen. American Jews were in any case on their way to realizing that an allegiance to Israel could not permanently confer a sustaining significance on their lives—not only because Israel had failed to provide them with applicable models of Jewish life for emulation, but because no community can exist for long by means of a vicarious identification with another.

Is there a Jewish people at all left in America today, a single collective body whose members, however they may quarrel about other things, mutually recognize each other as Jews and agree on the criteria for doing so? Certainly not in the sense that there was even twenty years ago.

THE LESS educated and/or religiously observant a Jew or his family is in America, the greater the chances of assimilating out of the community and reaching a Jewish vanishing point. The curve starts at one end with no Jewish affiliation of any kind and ends at the other with an Orthodoxy that has built, as it has done throughout history, social, ritual, and educational walls around itself.

Such walls, recent Jewish experience has shown, are indispensable for resisting the assimilatory tide; if non-Orthodox Jews wish their children to remain Jewish, they will have to build them too. And insofar as they increasingly adopt Orthodox patterns, they will find themselves moving back toward Orthodoxy itself. For Orthodoxy alone creates a Jewish superego; it instills not merely love for a tradition, but fear and guilt at the thought of leaving it. And while fear and guilt are not popular in liberal America, there will be no Jewish survival there without them.

Most American Jews, of course, are not prepared to flock to such a religion. They do not want to segregate themselves; they do not want the endless demands of ritual; they do not want what is not "relevant." And relevance has become, for almost everybody but the Orthodox, an American Jewish obsession. When it comes to Jewish spirituality, one can start with Midrash or Kabbalah, but before long one is back to feminism and gay rights. There is a kind of trick syllogism at work here: the spiritual is the timeless; the timeless is always contemporary; hence, the contemporary is the spiritual.

And yet there is a paradox here, too. When American Jews speak of making religion relevant, they usually mean that it should address contemporary issues in the mode in which these are addressed in the cultural and intellectual circles they themselves inhabit. But if this is already the mode in which these issues are addressed, who needs Judaism to address them? Contemporary values are doing well on their own; if all Judaism has to say about them is that it, too, now subscribes to them, what is irrelevant is Judaism itself.

Judaism—so I argued in *Letters to an American Jewish Friend* and would argue far more strongly today—has something to say to American Jews only if it is prepared to be unsparingly adversarial. And, a severely classical religion in a giddily neoromantic age, it is adversarial by nature. Most of what it has traditionally stood for—obedience to divine and human authority, subordination of the individual to the community, unremitting self-discipline and self-restraint, devotion to textual study, the necessity for endless repetition, vigilant regulation of bodily functions, the supreme importance of the family and procreation, consistent gender differentiation, hierarchical distinctions in all walks of life—is profoundly antithetical to the values of contemporary liberal American society.

The majority of American Jews will want noth-

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ing to do with this. And as Jews, they or their children will disappear.

"Your problem of identity," I said recently to a well-known American Jewish feminist and religious activist, "is that you don't live in Israel. If you did, you wouldn't have to assert your Jewishness by fighting for a place on the podium of an ancient patriarchal religion that has always wanted you in the kitchen. You could fight your battles where they belong, in a modern, secular society."

"I'd rather fight with tradition than lose its riches," replied the feminist. "And *your* tragedy is that you think that living in Israel makes you a Jew. Oh, you yourself are one, all right; you grew up in the Diaspora. But how about those children of yours for whom Zionism is so irrelevant? Are they and secularly raised Israelis like them any more than Hebrew-speaking *goyim*?"

Put a committed American Jew on the defensive, and sooner or later that is what you will hear. Hebrew-speaking *goyim*! An entire country of them! So much for your secular Israel!

I could have answered polemically. I could have said:

> Look here, secularly raised Israelis may not have the Jewish literacy of your own children, who attend a good American day school, but that's entirely the wrong comparison; it's comparing the least with the most. Suppose the *least* Jewish Jews in America spoke Hebrew and read Hebrew books—and studied (poorly, I admit) Jewish history, religion, and Bible for several years in school—and lived in totally Jewish neighborhoods and had only Jewish friends—and often spent Sabbath and holiday meals with their families, at which at least some Jewish rituals were performed—and served in a Jewish army and risked their lives to defend their fellow Jews—and, of course, married only other Jews. Would you not bless your good fortune in having such a Jewish community?

Or I could have said:

> The difference between being a Jew in a secular Israel and in America is the difference between a ball on an ordinary table and one on a billiard table. When a ball on an ordinary table gets to the edge, it falls off and rolls away. On a billiard table, it caroms back and stays on the table.

But having lost my taste for polemics, all I said to the well-known feminist was: "You're right. There's a problem."

Perhaps I was conceding too much. My children, it so happens, grew up as Israeli Jews of the type I have just described: not the kind of Jew I am, to be sure, and not exactly the kind of Jew I might have liked them to be, but Jews. Watching them has made me realize the limitations of a secular Jewish identity in Israel. This saddens me, but it does not strike me as a cause for despair. I do not think that the kind of minimal Jew that most young Israelis are is quite the indictment of secular Israeli culture that it is commonly interpreted as being—by Diaspora Jews, by religious Jews in Israel, and even by many secular Israeli educators and intellectuals.

Culture is *about* creating minimals; it is the safety net that catches everyone somewhere close to the ground. The product of an average Israeli home and school cannot parse any but the simplest parts of a Hebrew Bible and would not know what to do in a synagogue? No, he cannot and would not. Would the average young Frenchman do any better with Racine and a Catholic mass? I forbear to ask what the average young American would make of a page of Shakespeare.

They will do, these Hebrew-speaking *goyim*. I have watched them head with their army packs for Lebanon and I have watched them head with their back packs for India; as long as they come home and stay home, none will be lost to the Jews. Beyond that, everything is a question of background and inclination. Some will go farther than others; a few will go far enough to create Jewish culture themselves. That is the way it works everywhere.

Nor, unlike many secular Israelis, am I disturbed by the resurgence of Israeli Orthodoxy, a phenomenon parallel to its counterpart in the United States. On the contrary: I welcome it. A strong Orthodoxy will allow secular Jewish culture in Israel to develop while still in contact with its religious roots. Tension there will be; civil war, no.

Of one thing, then, I still remain convinced: there is no better alternative for a modern Jew than Israel. And as a modern Jew, only Israel strikes me as quite real. In this respect, Zionism has not only given Jews a home, it has made of them an honest people. I would put that in my eulogy for it.

But *will* they stay home, those young people with packs on their backs and Jewish wanderers' blood in their veins? Will they stay the course if the rosy predictions of post-Zionism prove wrong?

We are told by post-Zionism's celebrants that the death of Zionism is nothing to mourn, for the movement launched by Herzl is passing away at a

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ripe old age, after a full and achievement-crowned life. Unlike other "isms" of our century, it did not crash in flames to a cataclysmic end or waste away in a revolting spectacle of putrescence. It accomplished what it set out to do, namely, to restore the Jewish people to independence in their land. Having done so, albeit at the cost of bloody conflict with the land's natives and neighbors, it leaves behind a grateful posterity that can lay that conflict to rest and turn to new and more private challenges. "Perhaps nothing enslaves the individual more than the 'high,' elevated meanings a community attaches to a life of devotion to collective goals," writes one leading post-Zionist spokesman, the Israeli political scientist Yaron Ezrahi, in his recently published and much praised book, *Rubber Bullets*. As against this, he continues, post-Zionism represents the victory of "liberal-democratic values," and opens the way to both "Arab-Israeli coexistence and a future Israel as an open and advanced society unthreatened by war." The Arabs, Ezrahi is quite certain, will cooperate.

It sometimes strikes me that, regarding Arab-Israeli coexistence, the difference between the Left and the Right in Israel has nothing to do with their relative perceptiveness. Both are equally guilty of projecting their own minds onto the Arabs. The post-Zionist Left says: "Fighting for land and national honor is primitive; *we* would never do it, and therefore the Arabs, once their reasonable demands are met, will not either." The paleo-Zionist Right says: "Land and national honor are paramount; *we* would fight for them, and therefore so will the Arabs." Both pure projections—but the mind of the Right, alas, may be more attuned to the mind of the Arabs.

It is possible, though far from certain, that the Oslo process will end in a territorial and diplomatic compromise. It is likely, however, that such a compromise will eventually be the starting point for a new series of Palestinian demands. If Israel can be rolled back to nearly its 1967 borders, why not farther? Especially a post-Zionist Israel which, as Ezrahi says, wishes to "blunt, demystify, despiritualize, and devalorize the use of Jewish power vis-à-vis the Arabs."

If that should happen, Israelis like Ezrahi may have to pay a terrible personal price for being mistaken. But what about those American Jews who have supported the peace process enthusiastically and have scathingly criticized its opponents, thereby helping to shape, in America, a heavily one-sided view of the political debate in Israel? Although the imaginary friend of my book argued on behalf of the ethically advantageous position of Diaspora life, I can think of no position more morally compromised—and, for those who genuinely care about Israel, more morally excruciating—than freedom from the consequences of behavior one urges on others. And *that* is the price of Jewish life in the Diaspora.

ALTHOUGH ZIONISM lived to be 100, it will not have lived long enough. Given how pitifully little it started with, its successes have been spectacular. As at any funeral, they should be dwelled upon, and no words of praise for them can be too eloquent. But Zionism's failures cry out, too.

The Jewish people rallied to it too slowly. The Holocaust would never have occurred as it did had there been a Jewish state in Palestine in the 1930's—a not unachievable goal had Jews settled there in large numbers in the decade and a half between the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and Hitler's rise to power.

Nor did Zionism bring enough Jews to Israel even after its establishment. If the current peace process concludes, as it may well do, with a return to unsafe borders and a potentially breakaway Palestinian Arab minority within them, this will be a function of too few Jews. Another million or two immigrants after 1948 would have made all the difference.

Zionism failed, too, in creating a new worldwide Jewish identity. Its project of "normalizing" the Jewish people by redefining it in territorial and linguistic rather than religious terms stalled halfway, and in some respects has even lost ground. (It is worth remembering, for comparison's sake, that in Eastern Europe, on the eve of World War II, hundreds of thousands of young Jews spoke fluent Palestinian Hebrew and thought of themselves as part of a Palestinian Jewish nation whose land they had never set foot on.) That is why the future will see not one Jewish people but many, and why absurd quarrels over who is a Jew and what makes a Jew a Jew continue today in both Israel and the Diaspora.

And paradoxically, precisely when Zionism's pessimistic analysis of Diaspora Jewry has proved correct for the second time this century—for while Zionists did not predict the Holocaust, they alone foresaw the likelihood of the economic and political destruction of European Jewry—Zionism no longer exists as an intellectual force to offer American Jews a clear understanding of their situation.

But more than anything, the passing of Zionism leaves behind the question: when nothing is left to

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sustain the Jews of Israel but simple Israeli patriotism—no sense of being the revolutionary bearers of Jewish history, no higher Jewish mission—will that be enough? There are nations that stood their ground bravely because simple patriotism sufficed, such as England during World War II, and nations that fell because it did not, such as France in the same war. One can only hope that Israel will not have to stand the test.

As I say, I have mellowed; there is no point in being rude, or hurting feelings. I have never thought that living in Israel made me a better Jew, only that it made me a Jew living in a better place. But since this too is nothing Diaspora Jews wish to hear, I have learned to keep my peace.

Still, the old anger persists underneath. How much so, I myself did not realize until one evening not long ago when my wife and I were sitting with friends. The subject arose of the revival of Jewish life in Eastern Europe; a mutual acquaintance of ours is currently there, devoting himself to this cause. I found myself remarking heatedly that Jews living in America were one thing, but deliberately to start Jewish life all over again in a part of the world where Jews had been reviled and massacred for centuries—the only word I could think of for it was shameful.

"Well," someone said with that cheerful Israeli cynicism that passes for humor in these parts, "when we here are all dead from Arab nerve gas, you'll be happy there are Jews in other places."

That was too much for me. "If we're going to be dead here, I'd rather they were dead there, too," I said.

On the way home, my wife remarked, "That was a terrible thing to say. I hope you didn't mean it."

I thought about that. Did I mean it?

Yes. I meant it.

Not literally. I'm not that vengeful. But if Israel should ever go under—and I do not find it inconceivable—I would not want the Diaspora to continue. I would not want there to be any more Jews in the world.

It would be too shameful. That is the only word for it that I can think of.

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European Union—A Disaster in the Making

David Pryce-Jones

THE POLITICAL recovery of Europe since 1945 has been a story of unprecedented success. Communism has been brought down, and without a shot, let alone the sort of all-out war that earlier had been required to defeat Nazism. Democracy, where it existed already, has been strengthened; where it did not exist, above all in Germany and Italy, it has struck deep roots. In Britain and France, the loss of empire has led not to revolution and ruin but to higher standards of living. No West European country has serious irredentist claims upon any other, and external threats are more imaginary than real.

And yet, instead of consolidating and enjoying these gains, the entire continent is in the grip of uncertainty and rising instability. Once again, as between the two world wars, ordinary people face a restructuring of the whole European order which they are virtually powerless to affect. The cause of this self-inflicted crisis is European integration, a fraught and long-drawn-out process now inescapably coming to a head.

The West European countries are already taking measures to "converge" their economies according to what were originally quite strict criteria. This is a preliminary to the next step: as of January 1, 1999, all national currencies are to be replaced with a single European currency, to be known as the Euro. "The coining of money," in the words of William Blackstone, the founding father of jurisprudence, "is in all states the act of sovereign power." A common currency is inconceivable without common political institutions to support it, and these common institutions are the end toward which Europe is moving.

Down the centuries, the shifting relationships of Britain, France, Italy, and Germany have determined Europe's fate. Now, through the apparently benign and thoroughly boring technicalities of a common currency, a new relationship is struggling to be born. The final goal is a choice among several potential forms of political federation, some loose, some tight, the most grandiose of which is a United States of Europe. But if any one of them is to become a reality, the historic nation-states of Europe will have to surrender their sovereignty, and change out of all recognition.

PARTITIONED THROUGHOUT the cold war, Germany was "one nation, two states." Every German government had the long-term objective of reuniting the two states. French foreign policy, by contrast, looked upon partition as a lasting and valuable constraint on German power. What the French were afraid of was a revival of "European" ambitions on Germany's part of the kind they hoped had been defeated in World War II. In 1950,

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a left-wing French deputy, Francois Billoux, spoke for many of his countrymen when he said, "Europe was Hitler's idea."*

But there were others in France—Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman most notably among them—who clung to an old, prewar conviction that only genuinely supranational institutions could keep the peace in Europe; and as West German economic power grew by leaps and bounds in the 50's and 60's, French policy began to reverse itself. With growing panic, successive French governments sought to create the common institutions which might permit them to share in the gathering strength of Germany and, who knows, even direct or surmount it. By 1962 General de Gaulle was explaining to his colleague Alain Peyrefitte that European integration was the means by which their country not only could "prevent domination by the Americans or the Russians" but could "become what she has ceased to be since Waterloo: the leading power in the world." Germany, it was clear, needed friends, and its chastened postwar mood also held out the hope that a constructive relationship with other European powers would preclude further warfare.

From small acorns great oaks do grow. One Franco-German initiative led to another, and one treaty to the next. The result was the European Economic Community, which became the European Community, and is now the European Union (EU), a supranational construction of a type never before seen. In addition to France and Germany, its fifteen countries include Italy, Britain, Ireland, Spain and Portugal, Denmark and Sweden and Finland, the Benelux nations, Greece, and Austria. About the same number again—mostly in Eastern Europe but also Israel, Morocco, and Turkey—seek terms for membership or association. Norway, Iceland, and Switzerland have chosen to stay out.

Admission has been an erratic process. Those already inside have demanded their pound of flesh, while petitioners must decide what and how to pay. Once in, member governments have bargained fiercely for "opt-outs" and "derogations" without which they would never have been in a position to jump through the hoops of the next stages of integration, as called for in the series of treaties that culminated in the Maastricht Treaty of 1991.

That treaty commits the European Union to a single foreign policy, with a single defense policy to follow, and to a common citizenship with rights and obligations still to be defined. The agreed single currency, the Euro, is to be managed from a new European central bank, in Frankfurt, which will control the gold and dollar reserves of all countries in the EU. (This means that no country could again finance a war in its own interest, as Britain did in the Falklands in the early 80's.) The bank will also set a single continent-wide interest rate, the effect of which will inevitably be to benefit some regions and industries and hurt others. On the central-bank board will sit former heads of national banks, now reduced to the role of national spokesmen.

SUCH IS the forum where the interests of member countries of Europe are to be fought out. What this will be like in practice can be observed in the institutions already operating in Brussels, the capital of the EU. To anyone brought up to value democratic essentials like the separation of powers, checks and balances, and accountability, today's European Union is a bewildering improvisation imposed from the top, without the legitimacy conferred by popular consent. Its supreme body is the European Council, consisting of the fifteen heads of state or government, who meet two or three times a year for private discussion behind closed doors. Councils of Ministers then convert the ensuing agreements into policy.

These Councils consist separately of the ministers of foreign affairs, finance, transport, social affairs, and so on of their respective countries, and they too meet at regular intervals. Each such Council enjoys both executive and legislative powers, and may, in the words of an authoritative work on the EU,† "convene in any configuration it chooses." The same source goes on to observe that the individual Council "remains the most secretive as well as the most powerful of the institutions of the Union"; it is the only legislative body in the democratic world which meets and deliberates in secret.

The legislation generated by this process is then passed to the European Commission for execution. The Commission consists of a president and twenty commissioners, who are appointed to office and cannot be dismissed. They divide among themselves portfolios for trade, agriculture, the environment, and so on. Under them are some 20,000 bureaucrats who enjoy, again in the words of the same authority, a "unique combination of administrative, executive, legislative, and political activities and responsibilities." As a civil service, the European

* A new book by John Laughland, *The Tainted Source* (Little, Brown, London), elaborates informatively upon what its subtitle calls "The Undemocratic Origins of the European Idea."

† *The Penguin Companion to European Unity* by Timothy Bainbridge with Anthony Teasdale (revised edition, 1996).

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Commission is in fact unique in two respects: it may initiate and pass legislation, and it is accountable to nobody and nothing but itself.

In Brussels, some 700 standing committees do the work of government, of which about 400 are meeting on any given day. Decisions may be taken according to several different procedures, but the most usual involves what is called "qualified majority voting"—a euphemism for horse-trading and rigging.

Still another body is the European Court of Justice, or ECJ. This was set up with the specific mission—a political mission, not a judicial one—of furthering the ends of European integration. Commission and Court together are empowered to promulgate law through a variety of instruments, including regulations (which are absolutely binding on member states), directives (also binding but allowing each nation to implement them in its own way), recommendations, opinions, and resolutions.

Finally there is the so-called European Parliament, with some 600 members. Elected in their own countries, usually on a list system or by proportional representation, they really represent only themselves. European-wide parties do not exist. Without genuine legislative or even revisory powers, and hobbled by the official recognition of eleven different languages with all the attendant difficulties of interpretation and translation, the Parliament is a figurehead in the style of the Russian Duma. Its energies are devoted, in vain, to the wresting of power from Council and Commission.

In this state of things, "Europe" still has no sovereignty, in the true meaning of that word, but is rather a stew of German federalism, French *dirigisme*, protectionism, corporatism, and mass welfarism—all enshrined in an Orwellian language naturally known as Eurospeak and intelligible, if at all, only to the presiding Eurocrats. Key phrases such as "subsidiarity," "proportionality," "non-paper," "*engrenage*," and "co-decision procedure," as well as acronyms like Coreper and Ecofin, hide the human reality: here is a set of rules whose whys and wherefores can neither be anticipated nor readily grasped but from which there is no appeal. The Eurospeak for *that* is "democratic deficit."

THIS WHOLE structure arose within the confines of the cold war, which imposed limitations of its own on the European political scene. At least as long as that conflict lasted, the notion of an eventual political integration seemed to most European countries a secondary consideration, even chimerical, and whatever was happening in Brussels appeared to escape close analysis. Even so, however, the mounting costs of Brussels soon loomed larger than any benefits.

On the one hand there was the single market, designed to facilitate the movement of people and goods and to encourage free trade; to this, all could assent. But on the other hand there were such things as the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) and the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), which, as even the commissioners in charge were forced to agree, were open-ended disasters. Without regard to cost, every profession, trade, and industry had to adapt to standards dictated by the bureaucracy in Brussels, and this created a paradise for lobbyists and special-interest groups, as well as big businesses with enough clout to obstruct competitors. Intervention-buying led to surpluses: the notorious mountains of European butter and lakes of European wine. Impenetrable to the outsider, and all in Eurospeak too, a highly complicated system arose to block the free market through all manner of subsidies, grants, quotas, transfer payments, and special funds. Inventive command-bureaucracy like this is a novelty in the free world.

During the 80's, the project almost strangled to death in contradiction and red tape. The media and the public began to mock the weighty decrees from Brussels dictating the exact bulge of a strawberry, the precise degree of straightness of a cucumber, the impermissibility of a double-decker bus. No satirist could have had the inspiration that, in the name of free trade, animals and even plants should be obliged to have passports, or that whole breeds of dogs might be suppressed on account of the shape of their nose and the texture of their fur. (Canine racism!)

And then in 1989 the cold war came to its abrupt end and every supposition changed. Margaret Thatcher, then the British Prime Minister, and President François Mitterrand of France were quick to perceive that a new balance of power had emerged. Increasing its territory by 40 percent and its population by 25 percent, Germany was back in size to what it had been before World War II, and Russia was no longer there to provide a counterbalance. For the first time in its history, Germany could now settle relations with the rest of the world peacefully and on its own terms. As for the United States, successive American administrations, though they no doubt thought the prospect unlikely, had always argued in favor of German unification, and President George Bush waved it through without a second thought.

Chancellor of Germany since 1982, Helmut

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Kohl was convinced that he was the man fitted to shoulder the responsibilities of the new situation. A more dependable ally of the United States than his immediate predecessors, Kohl conceived of Europe as a bloc in the making, and he was able to push through his idea from a position of economic and political strength. By means of the Maastricht Treaty, he proved himself far and away the most influential politician anywhere outside the United States. Maastricht may be seen as the European treaty that was never signed after the conclusion of the war; it is, to the contemporary order of Europe, what the Versailles Treaty was after World War I.

But why should anyone want this new arrangement? Why should the Germans, of all people, want it? The guilts and atonements of Nazism are on the ebb; the German constitution, the Bundesbank, the deutsche mark are rightly seen as solid achievements. To surrender these things for the sake of Europe must seem an almost saintly act of abnegation, if not of national martyrdom.

And Germany also has its hands full at the moment. At the time of reunification, East Germany was reputed to be the tenth or perhaps eleventh largest economy in the world; in fact, it was a bankrupt rust-belt whose goods were fit only for a command economy. With East German industry uncompetitive, much of it simply closed down, raising unemployment to 30 percent or more. Since then, sums on the order of 100 billion marks have been transferred every year from West to East to pay the costs of reunification, and some experts calculate that twenty more years of such payments will be necessary.

Germans, in short, have already found it hard and expensive to integrate with other Germans. Unemployment stands officially at 4.7 million—about the number just prior to Hitler's takeover—and this figure is almost certainly understated. German wages are already the highest in the world, and taxes and social charges add 90 percent to employment costs. Moreover, Germany's difficulties have had consequences for other countries in Europe, which, given the criteria imposed by the goal of a common currency, have had to adopt the high German interest rate and have suffered deflation and recession for their pains.

To Helmut Kohl, however, these are only trifles on the way to the goal of integration. Where Bismarck united Germany by force, he is determined to go one better—to resolve the German question by uniting all of Europe, and with strokes of the pen rather than the sword. The reason, he maintains, is that aside from the manifest good that is to be found in federation, his countrymen must be tied, locked, bound, embedded, and contained. A strong Germany needs weakening, not only to appease its rightly anxious neighbors but for its own sake.

At times Kohl even invokes the threat of a resurgent German nationalism, with all the fears this specter can arouse in Europe. In February 1996 he warned that "the policy of European integration is really a question of war and peace in the 21st century." A policy paper issued by his party was even bleaker: "If European integration were not to progress, Germany might be called upon, or tempted by its own security constraints, to try to effect the stabilization of Eastern Europe on its own and in the traditional way."

To be sure, it is possible to argue—as some of Kohl's critics do—that he cannot be sincere. Is all this not just a brilliantly expedient dressing-up of German imperialism as altruism, taking measures calculated to achieve supremacy under the pretense of forgoing it? But Kohl is no conspirator. Like many Germans of his generation, he genuinely conflates nationalism with Nazism, and therefore believes that nationalist sentiment has to be submerged and then suppressed by means of a supranational structure. Kohl's rigid conception of ultimate European union is the price to be paid for his rigid conception of the German past.

In any event, the German chancellor insists on pushing through his policy no matter what political and economic realities might suggest. The slightest postponement of the timetable will, he prophesies, wreck the peace of Europe, and there can be no turning back "unless we wish to challenge fate." In this he is seconded by the new President of Europe, Jacques Santer of Luxembourg, to whom any resistance either to the Euro or to the timing of its introduction is the work of "pessimists against whom I declare war." Under pressure, they and their officials also mutter that the Euro will enable Europe to resist the dollar, as if that were self-evidently a sensible thing to do.

OTHERS, HOWEVER, hold a different view of these matters.

Germans themselves have become increasingly nervous and doubtful about the rewards that will crown the sacrifice asked of them. Why, they have begun to ask, should they incorporate into the hard mark a number of soft currencies debauched by unscrupulous foreign politicians? Do they really have to pay for inherent economic backwardness or mis-

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management elsewhere in Europe? Why must they placate the whole range of eager supplicants and subsidy hunters—backward peasant farmers, industries protected from competition by socialist governments, inefficient producers and retailers in other lands?

In a recent survey, 79 percent of Germans said they wanted a referendum before going farther, and the same survey indicates that the outcome of such a referendum would be close, with only 43 percent in favor of abolishing the mark and 44 percent against. In another poll, only 14 percent of German businessmen believed that monetary union would be beneficial to them, and 55 percent expressed doubt. It cannot reassure the Germans that opinion polls in Spain, Italy, Belgium, Ireland, and elsewhere show large majorities there in *favor* of monetary and political union. These populations visualize European federation first as an escape from their own internal weaknesses and then as fairy-gold prosperity, backed by all that good German discipline and hard work.

In France, a number of intellectuals and politicians are now saying openly that Germany has grown into the outright winner of World War II, while France has been revealed as the outright loser. For such people, only the capture of the mark can halt the German drive to power, and gain the French a disproportionate influence in the order set up by the Maastricht Treaty. When President Mitterrand consented to hold a referendum to approve that treaty, he, like other European leaders in the same circumstances, went to extreme lengths to fix the result; nevertheless, he obtained national assent to its terms by less than 1 percent. President Jacques Chirac is not prepared to allow either a parliamentary vote or a referendum on the next steps toward union. Polls, however, show that the country is split down the middle. Unemployment running at 12 percent and deflation, which many Frenchmen see as German-led, are causing demonstrations and low-level violence, of which foreigners are usually the victims.

The British, albeit acrimoniously, have gone along with the drift of things over the years, while unilaterally opting out from particular EU policies they have not liked or have been unable to keep. One of these was the Exchange Rate Mechanism, or ERM, the prototype of today's Euro-convergence criteria. On Britain's entry to the ERM in 1990, the pound was overvalued against the mark and the money markets could not take the strain. The government of John Major had no choice but to abandon the ERM regime altogether in 1992, and other countries then followed suit. The surviving inner group of France, Germany, and the Benelux countries, bogged down in the recession brought about by their collective monetary policy, remains resentful of what looks like Britain's lucky escape (and of its current economic well-being).

Since then, arguments for and against the Euro and ultimate federal union have engaged British politicians and businessmen in fierce hand-to-hand combat. Opinion polls reflect public awareness of the upheavals in store. In 1995, 61 percent were voting to stay in Europe, 29 percent to leave; by early 1997, only 42 percent were voting to stay in and 38 percent to leave (20 percent were undecided). In the run-up to this May's general election, most Conservative-party candidates declared themselves against the Euro and other obligations under Maastricht, and in this respect at least they seemed to have the agreement of British voters, some two-thirds of whom were now expressing the wish to have no more European integration.

Mainly, however, British policy toward Europe has been marked by hypocrisy. The assumption is that union is anyway impossible, and federation an idle dream, so that the prudent thing is to stand aside as the project sleepwalks to its doom. But what if, instead, it comes into being? Although a recent government White Paper asserted that even within a federal Europe, Britain would remain an independent nation-state, both major political parties tacitly concede that this cannot be true. Sizable minorities seem to believe that in the end Britain will take a Churchillian stance, and back out of the European Union altogether. Yet these political minorities have also remained comparatively silent, even as Britain's national interest, its identity, and the whole reading of its history hang in the balance.

IN THE meantime, every European country, Britain included, already has two heads of state—its own and the EU president, Jacques Santer—two capitals, two parliaments, two flags, and, above all, two systems of law: national law, and the law decreed by the European Court of Justice. In 1990, a British judge in a British court ruled that entry into the Union (then still known as the Community) under the terms of the previous Treaty of Rome had indeed meant that "Parliament surrendered its sovereign right to legislate contrary to the treaty on the matters of social and economic policy which it regulated." And those "matters" are constantly proliferating. Mutually reinforcing one another, the European Council and the ECJ decree continually enter new fields, fortifying the Maastricht order

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and steadily diminishing the place of national law.

The war of laws has brought the rule of law in Europe altogether into disrespect. European elites increasingly treat public life as a vast patronage system, there for the plundering. National courts now hear scandalous cases in which heads of governments, ministers, leaders of industry, parliamentary deputies, even the one-time Secretary General of NATO, are charged with theft of public funds, profiteering from office, and even murder—yet somehow the prison doors never quite close on them. In all of this, Brussels sets the pace.

For Brussels with its bureaucracy is an extraordinary swamp of systemic fraud and crime. The total EU budget is 55 billion pounds (approximately $89 billion), for which there is no proper accounting. Perplexed auditors admit that in 1995, the last year for which official figures exist, almost $10 billion disappeared through corruption and mismanagement, and between 4.3 percent and 8.5 percent of the budget was lost through error (no attempt is made to explain why the margin is so wide). According to unofficial sources, a quarter of the EU budget goes missing somewhere in the channels of disbursement. Like the old Soviet *nomenklatura*, the bureaucrats award themselves tax-free salaries and privileges. None of this, however, concerns the ECJ, which is too busy promulgating new law to prosecute violations of the old.

NO WONDER, as the outlines of a supranational Europe become visible, that another law—the law of unintended consequences—has begun to make itself felt. As the nation-state surrenders to something larger than itself, it is leaving behind a vacuum, and ethnicity is filling that vacuum fast. A number of European countries contain ethnic minorities; claiming to represent these minorities, small groups have started movements of "national liberation" on the third-world model. Rejecting assimilation as "oppression," they resort to terror. Basques in Spain, Flemings in Belgium, the IRA in Britain, Corsicans in France, all threaten the social and political cohesion of their respective nation-states.

As ethnic consciousness rises, so does its counterpart, nationalist xenophobia. Nobody knows the figures for sure, but in Europe there seem to be around twenty million immigrants, legal and illegal. Almost without exception, those legally in Europe have rights equal to those of native citizens. In the main they have arrived from Africa and the Muslim world, and lately from the former Communist bloc as well. Popular opinion often blames these foreigners for diluting the old identity of the nation-state.

Historically, the nation-state has satisfied but also controlled nationalism, which otherwise builds up like underground gas, to explode when it can. The Maastricht order, however, *encourages* the build-up of noxious pressures. If national parliaments and institutions no longer represent the sentiments of large numbers of people, some of them will make up for the "democratic deficit" in the only way available, through new political formations and parties which express and give form to their grievances.

Nationalist, willing to be strong-armed though not exactly fascist, these strange new groupings—the Northern League in Italy, the Flemish Bloc, the National Front in France, Jorg Haidar's Austrian Freedom party—are the inadvertent products of the European Union, which after Nazism and after Communism is the latest would-be usurper of national sovereignty in Europe. They have been capturing ever-larger shares of the vote, up to a third in some elections, and they have prospects of power. And there may be worse to come. Historians unanimously maintain that the reparations imposed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles gave rise to a German desire for revenge and helped make Hitler possible. What will the backlash be when Germans come to believe that the dissipation of their economic strength to other countries is a policy of reparations in a new form?

Motivated by emotional and ill-considered attitudes to the past, lured on by the mirage of a Grand Design, the Kohls and Santers and their kind are embarked upon a utopian experiment which is mustering the very same destructive forces it claims to be eliminating. The national interests of Britain, France, Italy, and Germany remain what they were. On the day these interests collide, there will be nothing except the Euro and a half-formulated anti-American ideology to hold together the artificial scaffolding that is Brussels, and ward off a general collapse in anger, disillusionment, and violence.

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Doing Daddy Down

Elizabeth Powers

When I was a child, there were times when I thought my mother should leave my father. Children only slowly get a feel for the limits on action: if, I reasoned, my parents still had checks in their checkbook, then why could they not write one to purchase a new car (or bike, etc.)? If my mother sometimes felt as much pain as she clearly did because of my father, then why could not she and I, and later my sister and brother, simply move to Anaheim (one of my dream destinations, home of Disneyland and near movie studios that I hoped to crack) and start over again? My mother, so I thought, would find a new husband (someone powerful, with connections to movie studios), and life could resume afresh. In pursuit of this goal I used to write letters to the Chamber of Commerce of Anaheim and Burbank concerning housing and jobs.

I am shocked now at how quickly I seized on divorce, on abandoning my father, as an escape-hatch from pain. Among my own kind—that is to say, white Southern Catholics—divorce was so uncommon that the closest I came to knowing about it was through the case of a friend of a neighbor, a pious woman who would not go against the sanctions of her religion to marry the divorced man with whom she was in love. Of course, I never imagined that one could actually do without fathers altogether, and my daydreams always featured a new father to replace my own. This sense of interchangeability I now regard as something of a moral failure, with all due consideration for my tender years.

But now the social forces that were subliminally affecting me so many years ago have come, as it were, to fruition. At the end of the 20th century, what with sperm donors, fertility specialists, selective abortion, and all the other proxies of reproduction, biological paternity has come to seem something almost quaint, and certainly tangential. To believe *The Modernization of Fatherhood*, a recent academic study,[1] the father of the future will be interchangeable with the mother of the future or, depending on your income level, with the modern nanny or social worker. In a bland, nonjudgmental tone, this book details the development and institutionalization of "parenting skills," "household division of labor," "caretaking," and so on, quite as if actual biological fathers were a commodity we could do with, or do without, as we pleased and as circumstances allowed.

And if the notion of the father as more than an accidental link to our physical inheritance is rapidly disappearing, so too is any notion of the father as a link to our *spiritual* inheritance, to the cumulative consensus of the millennia—also known, by

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[1] *The Modernization of Fatherhood: A Social and Political History* by Ralph LaRossa. University of Chicago Press, 281 pp., $55.00 ($18.95, paper).

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those hoping to usher it off the stage of history, as the patriarchy. For women in particular, the easy availability of birth control and abortion has meant a new freedom, not only from unwanted conception but, in some cases, from all the burdens and necessities represented so potently by the figure of the Father. Indeed, as a number of recent memoirs suggest, some contemporary women feel under no compulsion to make their peace either with their dads and what they represent or, more generally, with anything having to do with our cultural tradition and its claims. Their motto might be that of Mary Wollstonecraft: "Every obligation we receive from our fellow-creatures is a new shackle, takes from our native freedom, and debases the mind."

Kathryn Harrison's *The Kiss*[2] is by now a notorious book—notorious above all for the passages in which Harrison narrates the incestuous affair she conducted with her father. But even aside from the central subject of incest, *The Kiss* offers more compelling themes for contemplation than Aeschylus or Eugene O'Neill could handle in a dozen plays: self-mutilation, sadism, starvation, necrophilia, soul murder by one's nearest and (supposedly) dearest. Harrison's mother, as represented here, was a real Medea, who liked to discuss her sex life and past lovers with her daughter and took her to a gynecologist to be fitted for a diaphragm before she went off, still a virgin, to college. So Kathryn was a very confused individual when Dad, banned from the household since she was a baby, waltzed back into her life as a twentysomething and the two proceeded to engage in furtive trysts as they crisscrossed the country in their *Lolita*-like saga of turpitude.

At odds with the horrors Harrison narrates (the authenticity of which has been doubted by some reviewers) is a flatness of tone that is suggestive of someone merely going through the motions of her emotions. Harrison employs a postmodernist style—pastiche, sentence fragments, backtracking, fast-forwarding, a general lack of narrative momentum. This grab-bag style is about avoidance: the point, one might think, is that there is no point. Such dead-endedness also characterized Harrison's 1993 novel, *Exposure*, which mixed kleptomania, cocaine, pornography, classy exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, and suicide in about equal portions.

The bland, affectless presentation, however, fatally undercuts Harrison's desire (presuming she has such a desire) to make us appreciate her situation as the victim of a predatory father. More than that, by failing to set her story within the context of any larger repository of shared human experiences, Harrison effectively forestalls the reader from entering imaginatively into her life. Although from one point of view this lack of cultural resonance may seem purposeful—the author's break with the baggage of tradition cunningly replicating her break from the evil Father—most likely it simply indicates ignorance. Like many contemporary authors, Harrison does not appear to be very well or very deeply read: it is hard to tell from this memoir whether she is even familiar with the Oedipus story. And without cultural freight, without history, although there may be self-invention, there is no connection.

Toward the end of *The Kiss*, at a Jewish memorial service for her grandfather, Harrison finds herself healed of her unholy attachment to her father. Two other recent books, Mary Gordon's *The Shadow Man: A Daughter's Search for Her Father*[3] and Nancy K. Miller's *Bequest and Betrayal: Memoirs of a Parent's Death*,[4] similarly end at cemeteries. While such moments often force us to come to terms, however feebly and tentatively, with our past and our own place in the chain of transmission, both these artful memoirs remain suffused with undigested resentments and with a continuing and ultimately sterile refusal of family loyalty of any kind.

Mary Gordon's father died when she was seven years old; her book recounts her quest as a mature adult to discover and understand this "shadow man." In the course of her search, which took her to archives and public-records offices from Massachusetts to Ohio, Gordon, who is also the author of such "Catholic" novels as *Final Payments* and *Men and Angels*, pieced together an American story of Gatsby-like transformations. Her father's life traced an arc from Lithuania, where he was born a Jew at the turn of the century, to emergence as a conservative Catholic in New York in the 1930's, with many a racy escapade in between.

Gordon represents herself as having been almost agonizingly in love with her father as a child. Thus, it was a shock to discover as an adult that he was less than God (the comparison is her own), that he was possessed of a vulgar side (he wrote for "humor" magazines), and that he may have been a Jewish anti-Semite. As a writer, Gordon might at least be expected to appreciate, however wryly, the fictions her father invented about himself—e.g., that he had gone to Harvard with T.S. Eliot. Instead, though her

[2] Random House, 207 pp., $20.00.

[3] Random House (1996), 274 pp., $24.00.

[4] Oxford (1996), 194 pp., $23.00.

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rage is to some extent disguised, censure inevitably follows on her declarations of love:

> Everything he wrote or edited was patched together, cobbled together not very smoothly, not very well. I'm not even left with the pride of the daughter of a fine stylist. He was far from great; he wasn't even very good.
>
> Does the fact that he is, by every standard, a failure, relieve me of the responsibility of exposing him? And the fact that he is dead?

This memoir gives new meaning to the sins of the ninth circle of hell. Even Lady Macbeth hesitated to kill Duncan, her benefactor, because he reminded her of her father. *Shadow Man* continually put me in mind of the East German children who revealed to the secret police their parents' reading habits or such mundane details as their choice of cigarette brands. Ultimately Gordon's father is even indicted by his daughter, on the most trumped-up evidence (one of her chapters is titled "Police Investigation"), for the Holocaust and the crimes of Hitler.

Somehow, I suspect that had he followed the really smart people of the 1930's and gone leftward rather than rightward, this man's daughter would be telling his story differently. But whatever he was in actuality, his example seems to serve a larger purpose. In demonstrating the sham nature of her father's existence, Gordon not only extinguishes him and the tale he told about himself but exposes the spurious nature of other, even more resistant, patriarchal institutions, including God Himself and the Roman Catholic Church. The effect is to leave Mary Gordon standing alone—the author of this memoir, the one and only author of her own life. Amid so much else that arouses her displeasure, this, at least, is a prospect that appears to please her.

A SIMILARLY empty exercise in self-invention is Nancy K. Miller's *Bequest and Betrayal*. It too is narrated in the first person, though the "I" of the book is oddly decentered. (Miller, appropriately, is a professor of literature of pronounced deconstructionist sympathies.) The memoir takes the form of a kind of conversation, in which Miller's account of her father's progressive debility and death from Parkinson's disease is interspersed with the voices of writers like Philip Roth, Simone de Beauvoir, and Susan Cheever, the cartoonist Art Spiegelman, and others, all of whom have in one way or another given us their thoughts about *their* fathers.

It is ironic that men who daily stand on train platforms, in cold weather and hot, who worry if the pain in their chest means they will die before they get their children through college, should have produced a class of daughters like Nancy K. Miller. That her father worked for decades as a lawyer on Wall Street, which enabled her to attend Barnard College in the 1950's, elicits not the slightest hint of retrospective gratitude. ("[H]e rented space in the glorious Woolworth building," she comments tartly, "an address his practice never quite lived up to.") Instead, after going on to earn a Ph.D. from Columbia, and to become a professor, Miller took her mother's maiden name. So shadowy is her father's existence that I had to go back through this book and search for his given name.

In writing about the intimate details of her father's sickness, Miller declines to refer to her own feelings or to examine her conscience concerning the propriety of what she is revealing. Instead, she hides behind the work of her chosen interlocutors who, she suggests, have committed "betrayals" of their own. *Her* betrayal, at any rate, comes not from writing about her father but from her inability to honor him. It is chilling to contemplate her lack of pity—of fellow feeling—for his weaknesses during his final year, when there seems to have been no one, including her, who cared whether he lived or died:

> One day when his fingers had grown so rigid that he couldn't, as he put it, "snare" his penis, he wanted to get up and go to the bathroom. It was late and I wanted to go home. So looking and not looking, I fished his penis out from behind the fly of his shorts and stuck it in the urinal. It felt soft and clammy.

In passages like this one Miller shows just how far she is from, say, Philip Roth, one of her interlocutors, who in *Patrimony* (1991) similarly stooped to exposing some of the most shaming episodes of his father Herman's last year but who at the same time gratefully accepted not only his father's inheritance but his own responsibility for guarding and transmitting it. Blocked by the ideology of self-invention from acknowledging the sacrifices her father made for her, Miller is ill-equipped to deal either with his dying or with his legacy. Precisely because she is one of those professors who have done so much to kill off the pleasure people used to get from literature, I am tempted to nominate her as a main character in the novel of human disconnectedness (by Philip Roth?) that is screaming to emerge from this bloodless memoir.

IS THERE a connection between the loss or repudiation of the figure of the father and the failure of authors like these to create compelling

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works of the imagination? It is almost as if, in severing themselves from *their* patrimony, Harrison, Gordon, and Miller have committed an act of impiety for which the Furies have taken just revenge: they write very bad books. But perhaps the question should be asked in a different way: is there a positive connection between spiritual and literary procreation, such that a writer's progeny—her books—owes something crucial to the attitude she takes toward her inheritance?

Mary Karr's *The Liars' Club*, which won a PEN award for nonfiction in 1996 and has been on the paperback best-seller list for over a year, vividly links a family's epic struggle to raise its children with the evolution of the daughter into a writer,[5] and in doing so points up what is missing from the books I have discussed so far. The memoir takes its name from a group that included Karr's father and several other men who cleaned the rigs in the oil fields of East Texas, and who would spin tales as young Mary sat and listened:

> "I'll tell you just exactly how my daddy died," Daddy says. "He hung hisself." This is easily the biggest lie Daddy ever told—that I heard, anyway. His daddy is alive and well and sitting on his porch in Kirbyville with his bird dogs. I gawk at Daddy's audacity, while the men in the room shift around at his seriousness. . . . They twist around on their folding chairs like they would rather corkscrew holes in the floor and drop out of sight than hear about somebody's daddy hanging hisself. Daddy unfolds the blade of his pocketknife—dragging out their squirming for them—and cuts a circle from a log of pepperoni. He lifts it to his mouth on the blade edge, then chews, "This is kind of tough, ain't it?"

The year in which these events took place was 1961, when Mary Karr was seven years old. The events she relates in the second half of the book occurred when she was nine. Even allowing for poetic license, the immensity of detail and the display of nearly total recall suggest that Karr learned well the art of lying from her father. And, like him, she can draw out a story: the scene above takes place in Chapter 6 of *The Liars' Club*, which is about when it finally dawns on the reader that the child's mother was an alcoholic, a realization that in other books would be the main point, and perhaps the only point.

Unlike Harrison, Karr links her own story to our oldest stories, thereby allowing readers much deeper access to the inner life of human beings than can be gleaned from the usual confessional mode of contemporary memoirs about incest or alcoholism:

> It was during one of those [college] visits that I found the Thibideauxs' burned-out house, and also stumbled on the Greek term *até*. In ancient epics, when somebody boffs a girl or slays somebody or just generally gets heated up, he can usually blame *até*, a kind of raging passion, pseudo-demonic, that banishes reason. So Agamemnon, having robbed Achilles of his girlfriend, said, "I was blinded by *até* and Zeus took away my understanding." . . . When neighbors tried to explain the whole murder-suicide of the Thibideaux clan after 30 years of grass-cutting and garbage-taking-out and dutiful church-service attendance, they did so with one adjective, which I have since traced to the Homeric idea of *até*: Mr. Thibideaux was Nervous.

All this is embedded in the opening scene of the memoir, in which we also learn that Karr's own mother was taken away because of being Nervous. Not until 145 pages later do we finally get to witness the actual precipitating attack of the mother's *até*, a drunken rage during which she destroyed everything of value in the house, including her own paintings and books and the children's toys and clothes.

Beyond being a well-told tale of troubles endured and troubles overcome, Karr's memoir constantly leads one to think afresh about families and the complicated ways in which children, even in the most trying and imperfect circumstances, become moral beings. And to be a moral being, one is reminded by *The Liars' Club*, means among other things to be imbued with a sense of one's ties to others, including preeminently one's parents and, beyond them, to the generations that recede far into the past.

In Book II of *The Aeneid*, Virgil's epic poem, Aeneas flees burning Troy carrying on his shoulders his aged father, who in turn carries the ancestral gods. Educated women with even modest means today have libraries much larger than Virgil's, or Newton's, or Goethe's, and certainly have better kitchens. Emancipation also means that women can indulge all the opportunities for good and bad behavior, for skullduggery and rectitude, that participation in the widest range of public life offers. But it takes a writer like Mary Karr, grafting her story to our oldest literary roots, to remind us that women also have a stake in the transmission of our common spiritual inheritance, and to demonstrate what is lost when they repudiate it.

[5] Viking Penguin, 320 pp., $11.95 (paper).

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Abraham Cahan, the "Forward," and Me

Seth Lipsky

A PORTRAIT of Abraham Cahan (1860-1951) is the first thing that greets a visitor to the offices of the *Forward* in New York. It attracted me from the moment I first stopped by the editorial rooms in 1983; the paper, originally published in Yiddish and known as the *Jewish Daily Forward*, had recently retreated to weekly publication with an English-language supplement, and I was on a quest to bring out a new, full-scale Jewish weekly in English that would bear the *Forward* name.

I had become an admirer of Cahan years before, though even today I'm not exactly sure how. I admired him as a newspaperman—in particular as editor of the Yiddish daily which he had helped found 100 years ago and built into a national newspaper with a circulation of more than a quarter of a million copies a day and editions in Los Angeles, Chicago, and Philadelphia as well as New York. Cahan edited the *Jewish Daily Forward* for 50 years, right up to his death in 1951. A bronze bust of him stands outside the boardroom on the second floor of the Workmen's Circle Building where the paper now maintains its headquarters. But I prefer the painting, a warmly colored canvas in which a stern-looking Cahan strikes a confident pose.

Early in my tenure at the *Forward*, this picture would provide what for me proved to be an illuminating insight. The occasion was a visit by Judith Vladeck, who served as general counsel not only to our newly-launched weekly but to the Yiddish *Forward* as well. As she entered the premises I was startled to see her lift her hand to avoid looking at the portrait of Cahan. Later she explained that, like others connected with the paper's traditions, she was not altogether an admirer of Cahan. Her own hero was B. Charney Vladeck, who, in the interwar years, had served as the old *Jewish Daily Forward*'s business manager. She admired him not merely because he had been her father-in-law but because his politics were quite a bit to the Left of Cahan's.

Although hardly the first moment I was made aware of political tensions at the paper, this conversation brought home to me that my own personal relations with Cahan and his inheritance might prove a good deal livelier than I had anticipated. But I am already slightly ahead of my story.

CAHAN HAD come to America from Lithuania in 1882, at the age of twenty-two. After contributing to a variety of Yiddish- and English-language newspapers (including Joseph Pulitzer's *World*), he helped found the *Forward* in 1897, when he was nearly forty. Months later, he left the paper on the grounds that it was nothing but an organ of the Socialist party. Of course, he was himself a socialist, and a radical trade-unionist, but he wanted editorial independence and he stayed away for nearly five years until he gained

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it. With his return in 1902, the *Forward* became the bridge which hundreds of thousands of East European immigrants crossed to become Americans.*

With the success of the paper, its proprietor, the Forward Association Inc., became a rich institution—albeit one that boasted carved likenesses of Karl Marx, Friedrich Adler, Ferdinand La Salle, and Friedrich Engels on its building on the Lower East Side. In its early years, the newspaper opposed Zionism, argued against American entry into World War I, and gave guarded support to the Russian Revolution. But in the 1920's, the *Forward*, while remaining unmistakably a voice of the social-democratic Left, turned bitterly against Communism, not only in Soviet Russia but also in America, where the Communists were seeking to take over the labor movement. Following Cahan's visit to Palestine in 1925, the paper also began to swing behind the idea of a Jewish homeland.

It may well be that a careful student could delineate the turnings of Cahan's life by marking the points where, upon encountering a conflict among the various causes to which he devoted his astounding energies, he steered for the Jewish shore. An illuminating story to this effect is told in a new short history of the *Forward* by the veteran labor journalist Gus Tyler. It seems that in 1891, still six years away from the paper's founding, Cahan had been sent as a delegate of the United Hebrew Trades to the second congress of the Socialist International. There, he promptly proposed that the assembled delegates determine the stand of "the organized workers of all countries concerning the Jewish Question."

At the time, Tyler notes, there was a rising tide of anti-Semitism in Europe, and "many workers, raised on a hand-me-down anti-Semitism," had come to "identify capitalism with Judaism." Yet several leaders of the European socialist parties, including the Jews among them, told Cahan they preferred that the issue not be raised, lest the International be "tarred as part of a Jewish conspiracy to destroy Europe's Christian culture." An incensed Cahan would not be appeased. He insisted on a debate, and the matter finally ended in only a wan resolution condemning both anti-Semitism and philo-Semitism—"a not so subtle suggestion," as Tyler puts it, "that while hating Jews was improper, it was necessary to see to it that the Jews did not take over."

For Cahan, the question all this raised was simple enough: to paraphrase Tyler, if being a socialist did not inoculate one against anti-Semitism, how could anyone guarantee that once the working class came into power, it would not use that power to discriminate against Jews? I believe that the lesson Cahan learned from his experience at the second congress of the Socialist International informed his work at the *Forward* for the rest of his days.

THE IDEA of bringing the *Forward* out in English had begun to gel in my mind in 1980, when I returned to America from an assignment in Asia for the *Wall Street Journal*. But it was not until 1983, well into the Reagan years and after my first tour as a member of the editorial board of the *Journal*, that I actually approached the paper. I did this not despite its liberal-Left politics but in large part because of them. I sensed opportunities for synthesis.

One early encounter occurred in July 1984, when I was wooing not only the *Forward* but also a colleague of mine at the *Wall Street Journal*, Amity Shlaes. She and I had become friends with Simon Weber, one of Cahan's successors as editor of the Yiddish-language *Forward*. We had gone to his apartment in Brighton Beach at the edge of Brooklyn for a little lunch in honor of the novelist I.B. Singer. As we settled in at a table of smoked fish and other delights, I mentioned an editorial the *Wall Street Journal* had run a few days earlier asserting that the ideal way to deal with immigration in America was to pass a constitutional amendment mandating open borders. "*Oy*," said Singer, looking up from his plate of vegetables. "All those Mexicans!"

I was appalled, and banged the table. "I can't believe my ears," I exclaimed. "Here I am, in the home of the editor of the newspaper that lit the way for the greatest wave of immigration in our history, having lunch with the greatest immigrant writer of the century, and when I tell you the *Wall Street Journal* is calling for open borders, you turn around and say '*Oy!*'" Weber motioned me out onto his balcony, which offered a magnificent view in one direction of Coney Island beach and in the other of the bustling community of newly arrived Russian Jews. He shook his finger in my face. "I know you guys from the *Wall Street Journal*," he declared. "All you want is cheap labor."

This struck me at the time as a great irony.

* In addition to editing and writing for the *Forward*, the indefatigable Cahan composed a five-volume autobiography in Yiddish and a number of remarkable works of English fiction, including *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917). He was also prolific in Russian.

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Aside from everything else the *Wall Street Journal* stood for, it had argued consistently that wage increases, in and of themselves, were noninflationary and a good thing. Nor could I recall a single editorial against the right of labor to organize.

What I am trying to say is that in pursuing the *Forward*, I saw at least a potential concord of views between it and the *Journal* on issues ranging from immigration to the containment of Communism to the defense of Israel to American race relations. But it is also true that, even as I moved deeper into the neoconservative camp, I still continued to cherish certain liberal ideals held by many of my family and friends in an earlier generation. I relished the chance to find a way to resolve the remaining contradictions, and editing an English-language *Forward* seemed to offer it.

Up until 1987, Weber was in opposition to my project. Whatever he thought of my politics, mainly he viewed what I had in mind as a distraction from the nurturing of the Yiddish language. But he finally came around to our argument that a successful English-language paper would not necessarily spell the end of the Yiddish paper and might even help sustain it. We sealed our understanding with a hug in the same apartment where three years before he had shaken his finger in my face.

By the time I gained an audience with the board of the Forward Association in November 1987, a failing Weber was too ill to attend. Given what I already knew of the place, I felt a little like Judge Bork going before the Senate judiciary committee; but the meeting itself went swimmingly—at least until the moment when Samuel Pisar, an international lawyer and survivor of Auschwitz who had been helping me, interjected that the directors were less interested in the easy questions than in the difficult ones. "Like what?" I asked. "Like Jabotinsky," Sam replied.

You could feel the chill come over the room. Sam knew of my enthusiasm for the journalist, soldier, poet, and visionary who had lobbied Great Britain for the formation of a Jewish Legion to fight alongside the Allies in World War I, organized the first Jewish self-defense units in Palestine, and then, in the 1930's, broken with the labor- and socialist-led Zionist movement over what he saw as its dangerously placatory and temporizing stance toward the British Mandatory power. As the founder of Revisionist Zionism, Jabotinsky had become the nemesis of the forces in the world Zionist movement led by Chaim Weizmann and David Ben-Gurion, and hence of many, if not most, American Jews. Clearly, Sam had thought it best to get everything out on the table.

I took a deep breath. "I know how Vladimir Jabotinsky appeared to members of your generation and of your movement at the time of the events," I said, referring to the *Forward*'s socialist leanings in the 30's and 40's. "But to my generation, or at least to me, looking back, the outstanding fact of Vladimir Jabotinsky's life is that he called for the evacuation of the Jews from Europe in 1932."

Our ideological discussion masked a good bit of support in the room for an English-language paper. But as things unfolded, Jabotinsky was to figure in subsequent bouts of combustion, quite a few of which centered on the question of Abraham Cahan and what he stood for.

THE FIRST time I was actually denounced as an unfit heir to Abraham Cahan was in the fall of 1990. The episode began with the appearance of an issue of the *Dartmouth Review*, a satirical right-wing undergraduate paper, that carried a quotation from *Mein Kampf* on its masthead. In the ensuing brouhaha I sent a reporter to New Hampshire to investigate, and I also called the editor of the *Review*, Kevin Pritchett, whom I'd met when he was a summer intern at the *Wall Street Journal*. Pritchett obliged me by writing a piece in which he explained to readers of the *Forward* that someone had maliciously stuck the quotation on the masthead as an act of sabotage, and no sooner had the prank been discovered than the *Review* recalled its entire press run.

I was already suspicious of the efforts of the college administration at Dartmouth to paint this incident as evidence that the *Review* was itself anti-Semitic. The paper had in fact been one of the few voices on campus speaking up for Israel. When Angela Davis, a genuine and openly pro-Soviet Communist and hater of Israel, was brought to speak at the college without (needless to say) a peep of protest out of the administration, only the *Review* had taken it upon itself to rebut her poison. So in an editorial we suggested, rather mildly, that the *Mein Kampf* incident was going to test the college administration's capacity for fair-mindedness.

All this, however, so outraged Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, then teaching at Dartmouth, that he sent a formal letter of protest to the Forward Association. He had had, he wrote, the privilege of

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knowing Abe Cahan and a number of the other editors of the Yiddish *Forward*, and "they did not create and maintain a newspaper of socialists and social democrats for their inheritance to become now, in English, an echo of the *Wall Street Journal*." In Hertzberg's view, the "morally correct thing to do [was] either to return the English edition of the *Forward* to the liberal traditions of the founders of the Forward Association, or to close the paper."

The letter was duly circulated among the board but found no takers. For my part, I wrote Hertzberg and invited him to lunch with the editors. In his note of refusal he asserted that I was "miscast as heir, even in part, to Abe Cahan."

NOR WAS Hertzberg alone in his sentiments, as I was to be reminded by a parallel incident in 1992. During the Democratic presidential primaries that year, Senator Robert Kerrey of Nebraska, who holds the Medal of Honor for courage under fire in Vietnam, tried to force a debate on the issue of Bill Clinton's draft-dodging. Dealing with the matter in an editorial entitled "Clinton's War," we noted:

> What voters want to know is whether the candidates have grown to understand Vietnam in its full tragedy—that even if strategists differ on whether we could have prevailed, America turned out to be right, after all.

We went on to say that the last candidate to tell "an American audience . . . that ours in Vietnam was a noble cause" had been the Republican Ronald Reagan, and that, in our opinion, no Democrat had gotten the issue straight since Hubert Humphrey. Finally, we opined that a President who could not understand in retrospect who had been right and who wrong in Southeast Asia could not be counted on to distinguish right and wrong anywhere else, including in the Middle East.

The paper was out for a few days when I received a letter from Jack Sheinkman, then president of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union and for years one of the heroes in the *Forward*'s firmament. Sheinkman wrote that he was "shocked and dismayed" at the editorial. The Amalgamated, which had played an early role in opposing the war in Vietnam, bowed to no one in its hatred of totalitarianism, but "recognized that wars should not be fought to prop up dictators of the Right or the Left." He concluded: "'My country, right or wrong' is not a sentiment I ever believed I'd see expressed in a newspaper founded in the spirit of Eugene Victor Debs and Norman Thomas."

I published Sheinkman's letter with an editor's note—and I also resorted to a device that would serve me well on other occasions. As part of the note, I included in English translation the full text of two editorials from the *Jewish Daily Forward*. One, dated August 10, 1964, strongly endorsed the Tonkin Gulf resolution which gave congressional backing for American forces to enter the war in Southeast Asia. The other was dated April 30, 1975—the day Saigon fell to Communist North Vietnam. "To the final minute," it said,

> the Vietnamese Communists did not stop their murderous bloodshed. . . . It is as if a mountain of about a million Vietnamese victims in the long and bloody war was not enough for them. And the bloodbath will not cease, even after the cease-fire. Then the bloody revenge of the Communists against their opponents will only truly begin.

HAD PEOPLE simply forgotten just where the *Forward* stood when it was at its apogee? It certainly seemed so. Another stalwart of the Left with selective memory, I soon discovered, was the literary critic Alfred Kazin, who reacted angrily to an editorial we published in April 1994 suggesting that Bill Clinton could end the national preoccupation with trivialities like Whitewater by doing something important; our own proposal was that the United States bomb North Korea's nuclear-weapons facilities, thus delivering a salutary blow to that country's warmaking capacities just as Prime Minister Menachem Begin had done to Iraq's in 1981. Irately, Kazin protested in a letter that our willingness to countenance war in Korea was out of character in "a paper founded a century ago on the blood and toil of peaceful laboring people who believed in harmony with people like themselves."

In response, we printed the *Forward*'s editorial of June 27, 1950, the morrow of the attack by Communist North Korea on the South. According to the editorial, this act of aggression clearly showed "the swindle and hypocrisy of the so-called 'Peace Campaign' which Moscow's agents have been promoting throughout the world," and concluded that if the Kremlin did not retreat, a new world war would become inevitable. In other words, at least *some* "peaceful laboring people" once understood that the world was not made up entirely of "people like themselves."

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BUT BY far the most contentious issues to arise during my tenure have been those involving the course of events in the Middle East. What do the *Forward*'s traditions demand of its editors in commenting on those events?

The first argument erupted in the summer of 1990, less than three months after we had begun publication, and was sparked by our coverage of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. My phone was ringing when I walked into the office one day at 7:30 A.M. My caller, Motl Zelmanowicz, a director of the Forward Association, was audibly enraged. He had begun the day by going to the newsstand and picking up the English-language *Forward*, only to discover on the editorial page an article by—he was so choked up he could barely utter the name—Ariel Sharon.

Attempting to calm him, I explained that in March 1989 I had gone with General Sharon for a picnic in the Samarian hills. We had come to an outcropping from which my host had gestured off into the hazy distance. "The next sound you hear out of the Middle East," he said, "is going to come from Iraq." The prediction had made an enormous impression on me, the more so because I had learned over the years that Sharon had an uncanny ability to forecast events.

My caller was, to say the least, unconvinced. "If this were an Italian newspaper," he keened, "would you have published an article by Mussolini?" Despite myself, I felt a surge of sympathy—though I also knew, and tried to tell him, that no one on the planet comprehended better than Ariel Sharon the order of battle in the war then erupting. Nor was the "line" Sharon took on these developments a departure for us. A week earlier, we had published an editorial arguing that if war was to come—as it must—the best course for President Bush would be to go to Congress and get a proper declaration.

Among ourselves, it is true, we had debated whether it was wise for the editor of the *Forward* to be calling for war without so much as a how-do-you-do, particularly at a moment when its inevitability was by no means obvious to other newspaper editors in the country. Still, even the most dovish among us saw the need to deal with Saddam by military force. And so as the Bush administration carried on its diplomatic dance that summer, I dug out an editorial probably written by Cahan and published the day after the Munich agreement in 1938 between Britain's Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and Adolf Hitler.

What struck me was not simply the clarity with which Cahan grasped the situation, but also the unbridled derisiveness of his tone. He visualized Hitler rolling in laughter, telling his clique in Berlin, "I, Hitler, now appear as the defender of the holy principle of the self-determination of peoples." I quoted Cahan's words in an editorial of my own about the grotesque spectacle then taking place as Secretary of State James Baker prepared to meet with Tariq Aziz, the Foreign Minister of Iraq.

Another occasion on which I sought the wisdom of Cahan on matters Middle Eastern was when the Israeli settler Baruch Goldstein murdered Arabs praying at the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron. All of us at the *Forward* were revolted by the act, and our editorial said so. But I felt it was important that these killings not be used to deny the right of Jews to be in Hebron at all. So I looked up what the *Forward* had had to say about another outrage in Hebron many decades earlier. In 1929, the Jewish community of that city had been driven out in the course of Arab riots in which more than 60 religious Jews, including women and children, were murdered. What I found was that the paper not only stood behind the Jews of Hebron, and lauded the courage of yeshiva students who fought back, but angrily questioned the point of having a British Mandatory authority at all in Palestine if it was not willing or able to protect the Jewish populace. This was a more remarkable stand than it may seem today—in 1929, the Left was quite solidly behind the Arabs.

IN FACT, every time I have dipped into the files of the *Forward*, I have found editorials on Zionism and Israel rippling with verve and strength and hewing to what, in the contemporary context, can only be called a hard line. By that I do not mean a line necessarily sympathetic to the Right in Israeli politics; not surprisingly, the paper had little use for the Revisionist groups, the followers of Jabotinsky, in pre-state Palestine or in Israel itself after the establishment of the state in 1948. On this point, my interview with the board in 1987 had confirmed the paper's sentiments accurately enough. But I have been unable to find any hint of wavering in the face of Israel's enemies. Last September, during the Arab rioting over the opening of a tourist tunnel in Jerusalem, we ran a full page of editorials from the time of the liberation of Jerusalem in the Six-Day War of 1967; they dripped with scorn for the United Nations, for Britain's Labor party, and for

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the Soviet-led international Left in general ("the noble comrades, with their crippled concepts").

Of course, by 1967 Cahan had been dead for over fifteen years. But it was clear that the paper was following the trajectory he had sketched. Indeed, I believe it is no coincidence that the fervency of Cahan's support for Jewish statehood grew in tandem with the liveliness of his anti-Communism. He never lost sight of where, after the obvious case of the Nazis, the real enemies of the Jews were likely to be found, and of what it would require to counter them. An appreciation for what he must have been thinking crystallized for me last year, when I sat down to write a review of *Lone Wolf*, a new biography, by the Israeli author Shmuel Katz, of—again—Vladimir Jabotinsky.

Before writing the review, I sent for a translation of the editorial the *Forward* had published when Jabotinsky died in New York on August 6, 1940. Mindful of my early interview, I was expecting a few paragraphs of dismissal. What I got, instead, was an extraordinarily admiring eulogy. "The death of Vladimir Jabotinsky at this grim time for the Jewish people is, in the true sense of the word, a national catastrophe," the editorial began. It proceeded to laud him as a person, a writer, and an orator; when he spoke, the paper asserted, "even the deaf could hear." But the sentence that struck me with particular force was the one predicting that Jabotinsky would be missed "not only now, in the middle of the storm, but also later, when the storm is over and the time comes to heal the wounds and rebuild Jewish life on new foundations in a new time."

I quoted this editorial in my piece on Katz's book, a piece that reflected my own abiding respect for its subject. Among the letters provoked by the review was one from a retired newspaperman named Harry Lopatin, who said he had been a young reporter on the *Forward* at the time of Jabotinsky's death. It seems that Cahan had tried to get his editors to cover the funeral, but to a man they had refused on grounds of political antipathy. "Send the youngster," Cahan finally commanded; and so Lopatin had drawn the assignment.

I scheduled Lopatin's letter for publication and, because I had enjoyed it so much, invited him to join us at a staff lunch. That morning, as I wandered by the office of my colleague Jonathan Rosen, I was horrified to spot on his desk a new book by the astronomer Carl Sagan (who has since died). "What's that doing here?" I snapped, and before Rosen could answer I burst out, "He's a Communist!" Rosen said that he had already assigned a reporter to interview Sagan. "He damned well better make it clear that we comprehend that Sagan's a Communist," I snorted. "But he isn't a Communist," my colleague reasonably protested. I harrumphed back that he might as well have been, given the campaign he had waged against the Strategic Defense Initiative when President Reagan was facing down the Soviet Union. Then I stomped away.

LOPATIN CAME in for lunch an hour or so later, and regaled the staff with stories of the old days. At one point, he was asked whether he had liked Abe Cahan. "Hell, no," he said. "I hated him." I perked up. "Cahan was a right-wing bastard," Lopatin continued. "We all hated him." Things went on in this vein until someone asked Lopatin what he remembered most about his editor. He thought for a moment. What he remembered most, he finally said, was that Cahan would sit in his office with the door open, and when he heard the name of someone he disliked, he would come barreling out, shake his fist in the air, and bellow, "He's a Communist! He's a Communist!"

As Lopatin related this story, I felt a kind of calm come over me. Not that I fancy myself Abraham Cahan's clone. But the longer I am around the less I share the concern that the *Forward* being produced today in English would be an affront to the editor who led the paper to greatness. It could easily be argued that the tradition at the *Forward* is to take one step rightward with each crisis that comes upon the Jewish people, though I would not want to push the point too far. Yes, times change, and so do circumstances. But my own view is that while times may change, Abraham Cahan would have perfectly well understood the contours of the struggles we are in today, and have responded in the spirit in which we carry on.

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Are We All Liberals Now?

Adam Wolfson

A LITTLE OVER a year ago, President Clinton vetoed the first partial-birth abortion bill. The bill would have made it illegal for doctors to perform a procedure in which a fetus, usually in its final weeks of gestation, is completely delivered but for the head, whereupon the doctor inserts a needle into the skull and sucks out the brain fluids, thereby crushing the head and aborting the baby. The bill, which would not have curtailed a woman's access to other, somewhat less gruesome procedures for dealing with unwanted pregnancies in the second and third trimesters, thus represented but a minor limit on "choice"—a limit that some traditional liberals, like Senator Daniel P. Moynihan, were willing to accept. But not President Clinton, who declared his intention to veto the bill again if Congress were to pass it in the same form.

Yet only a few months after vetoing last year's version of the bill, President Clinton *signed* a bill ending the half-century-old entitlement to welfare. No longer would the poor have a right, guaranteed by the federal government, to a basic standard of living. What is more, Clinton signed the bill over the protests of many traditional liberals, again including Senator Moynihan, who predicted it would force a third of a million children onto the streets.

What was going on here? Were these two decisions merely tactical, examples of that famous process of "triangulation" whereby the President zigs and zags in order to position himself in the politically popular center? That could not be. Since both bills were favored by the majority of Americans, sheer triangulation would have dictated that Clinton sign them *both*. Alternatively, triangulation mixed with a bit of old-time liberal ideology would have dictated that he give way on partial-birth abortion but veto the welfare bill (as undoubtedly a President Moynihan would have done). That he did the opposite suggests that the President was responding not to focus groups and polls but to something deeper that characterizes our historical moment. Although the partial-birth abortion debate continues—and Bill Clinton is a notoriously slippery politician—that "something" transcends the particular circumstances of particular bills and goes straight to the heart of modern liberalism.

FACING THE conditions produced by industrialism in the late 19th century, and spurred on as well by the utopian promises of Marxism and socialism, liberals in this century devised a whole complex of policies whose goal was social and economic security. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) would protect investors against banking panics; Social Security would provide for the elderly; Project Head Start, a subsidiary of the War on Poverty, would help disadvantaged preschoolers. The climax of this secular trend, which informed both ideological and party politics from the time of the Progressives through the New Deal and the

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Great Society, was Bill Clinton's unsuccessful effort to nationalize health care in 1993 and 1994.

Over the decades, conservatives correctly assailed many of these programs as plagued by waste and fraud, damaging to a free economy, and, most significantly, as in the case of Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC), destructive of the very human lives they aimed to improve. Yet, at least in intention, the original impulse at work behind these policies had nothing to do either with socializing the economy or with turning whole groups into permanent wards of the state. Quite to the contrary, liberal reform aimed at providing a helping hand to the deserving poor, the elderly, the sick, and the lower middle classes. It was only over time that many government welfare programs mutated into something else, and liberals sought new and ever more radical justifications for their existence and expansion.

But making humanity less prey to the vicissitudes of fortune was not the only impulse of modern liberalism. Another might be called the impulse toward personal autonomy or, as we call it today, choice. This, too, underwent a metamorphosis over time.

In 19th-century America, although the basic rights to life, liberty, and property were protected by law, choice itself was tightly constrained by moral and civic considerations, by custom and by local legislation. Profane and blasphemous speech was proscribed, pornographic materials were censored, gambling was prohibited. Moreover, ordinary employments were not allowed on the Sabbath. By and large, Americans did not view such laws as limits on their liberty. The constraints they imposed were, rather, believed to follow from a universal sense of what goes into the making of a civilized society.

It is precisely this understanding of the relation between the individual and civil society against which a later liberalism—the liberalism of "self-actualization" and "life-style"—would rebel. Here is how Michael J. Sandel (speaking as a critic) formulates the essence of today's liberalism of choice:

> Its central idea is that government should be neutral toward the moral and religious views its citizens espouse. Since people disagree about the best way to live, government should not affirm in law any particular vision of the good life.

And this brings us back to President Clinton. In signing the welfare-reform bill, the President was implicitly acknowledging the demise of one liberal impulse, the impulse toward security, just as he did when he announced in January 1996 that the era of Big Government was over. In declining to countenance a blanket restriction on partial-birth abortion, he was acknowledging that the other liberal impulse, the impulse toward choice, was still very much alive and well.

IN ACTING as he did, the President was on to something important. The impulse toward security had indeed become a mockery of itself, even in the eyes of some liberals. Despite large increases in government spending, the welfare of the poor in America had stagnated, or gotten worse, and preserving the federal entitlement to welfare had come to seem not a progressive step but a reactionary defense of the status quo—a status quo that had become an inducement to widespread social pathology.

But that is not all. The security impulse arose out of a particular set of historical and economic realities: the stark realities of the early part of this century. In later, more affluent times, among generations that had little direct experience of poverty and economic dislocation, the social question simply came to seem less pressing than the personal question. The New Left in the 60's, the acolytes of feminism and gay liberation, were speaking out of a personal experience very different from that of the previous generation of liberals, and this was inevitably reflected in the values they invoked.

Those values have now become institutionalized—so much so that the "right to choose" is something which not only upper-middle-class liberals but all Americans take for granted. Premarital sex, abortion, divorce: who has not taken advantage of the choices now available? In 1992, in its controversial *Casey* decision, the Supreme Court rightly observed that to overrule *Roe* v. *Wade*, the 1973 abortion decision, would be "to refuse to face the fact that for two decades of economic and social developments, people have organized intimate relationships and made choices that define their views of themselves and their places in society" on the understanding that they have a constitutional right to choose.

That is undeniably true—although it is also true that there is an essential peculiarity about the way in which the "right to choose" was itself chosen by the American polity. The economic reforms associated with liberalism's first impulse, the impulse toward security, were enacted with the support of democratically elected legislatures at the state and federal levels. Although efforts were made to constitutionalize these reforms—for example, the Supreme Court made it more difficult for states to refuse aid to the indigent—the Court never recognized a fundamental right to public assistance; it did not have to.

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By contrast, the "right to choose" has never had the explicit support of democratic majorities. Instead, it has found its way into America's soul by some other route: namely, the courts. Over the past 40 years, liberals pushing the doctrine of choice have succeeded in constitutionalizing it in the areas of speech, religion, family law, reproductive rights, and "life-style" generally. As the Supreme Court sweepingly put the constitutional case in the *Casey* decision, quoted above: "These matters, involving the most intimate and personal choices a person may make in a lifetime, . . . are central to the liberty protected by the Fourteenth Amendment."

IN THE end, though, it may not matter that the right to choose initially lacked the support of political majorities—any more than it now matters that these "choices" have been declared "central to the liberty protected by the Fourteenth Amendment." The point is that what was initially favored by the few has become enshrined in American culture, and will be dislodged only by the formation of a new political majority. But however that larger struggle eventually turns out, the "right to choose," notwithstanding its origins in contemporary liberalism, is today cherished straight across the political spectrum, including by many conservatives. At least in some cases, moreover, conservatives cherish it not only because it makes life easier, or more fun, but on the basis of what they take to be sound conservative doctrine.

This is so especially among conservatives of the anti-government and libertarian persuasions. Consider Charles Murray, who has long been one of liberalism's most penetrating critics and whose 1984 book, *Losing Ground*, probably did more to undermine the intellectual clout of the liberal impulse toward economic security than any other single work.

In his recent book, *What It Means To Be a Libertarian*, Murray offers a vision of the good society. That vision does differ from some versions of personal liberation on offer at the moment: for example, Murray emphasizes that the personal pursuit of happiness is not for everyone, but only for "mindful human beings." Still, when it comes to particulars, Murray is not very far from today's liberalism of choice:

> A lone adult should be permitted to engage in any activity of his choice in private. This freedom includes whatever he wants to read, watch, say, listen to, eat, drink, inject, or smoke. . . . Groups of adults have the same freedom, with the usual proscriptions against force and fraud.

Such a definition of choice—largely shared by such prominent conservative thinkers as Milton Friedman and the late F.A. Hayek—would appear to be sufficiently capacious to include most items on the Left's agenda, from the right to abortion, to the right to euthanasia, to the right to pornography, to the right to ingest addictive drugs. In the recent words of another libertarian author, limited government is commendable because it allows individuals to try "new ways of life."

What some conservatives appear to want, in other words, is for a hundred flowers to bloom. So do many liberals; and since we all have different "value judgments" as to when life begins, or ends, or about what constitutes a family, or about how to pursue "happiness," we should all be able to agree that government must remain, in Sandel's paraphrase, "neutral toward the moral and religious views" of its citizens, and that choice must in every case be respected.

THE ONLY thing missing from this consensus is a frank recognition that a government which is "neutral toward the moral and religious views" of its citizens inevitably exercises moral effects of its own, of which last year's presidential veto was a quintessential expression. When, for instance, the state can no longer say that pornography and gambling are bad for the soul and detrimental to civil order, or that divorce can result in an abrogation of duties to one's spouse and one's children, or that abortion raises the most fundamental questions about our attitude toward life itself, then the state effectively begins to say that such activities are morally tolerable, and thereby to collude in their spread. Moreover, the individual in this new dispensation (as Pierre Manent has pointed out) is in fact no more free than he was before; morally, he is as constrained by the new scheme of choice as by the older scheme of ordered liberty.

The convergence of liberals and at least one wing of the conservative movement on the principle of "choice" may well confirm what has long been observed of America—that there is but one political philosophy, and its name is liberalism. If that is the case, there is ample reason to fear that we have not yet traversed the whole path onto which we have been led by our attachment to limitless freedom, and from which most of us have found it almost impossible to extricate ourselves.

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MOVIES

Politics & Pugilists

Jonah Goldberg

IT MAY have been the most poignant moment of this year's Oscar ceremonies. As Leon Gast and David Sonenberg made their way to the stage to receive an Academy Award for their documentary, *When We Were Kings*, all eyes and cameras were on the film's main figures, both of whom were also in attendance: the boxers Muhammad Ali and George Foreman. Ali, who now suffers from Parkinson's syndrome, struggled to applaud but could barely manage a smile, while the once-fearsome George Foreman, Ali's former nemesis who is today one of America's most beloved sports figures, sat only an arm's length away. Gast ended his acceptance speech with brief thanks to Foreman and dramatic praise for Ali, the latter almost drowned out by the cheers from the glitterati as they leapt to their feet in a standing ovation. Above the din could be heard Gast's final words: ". . . and as President Clinton said, 'it's about time we as Americans start paying [Ali] back for everything he's done!'"

Was there anyone in the Hollywood crowd who appreciated the unintended irony of this juxtaposition? For Gast was quoting a President who, like Muhammad Ali, had opposed the American intervention in Vietnam but who, though then only a student, had shrunk from acting for fear of jeopardizing his "political viability." Ali, by contrast, who was already the heavyweight champion of the world, had readily sacrificed his title and risked his career, his good name, and even possibly his place in boxing history to protest the war.

But that is only one irony among the many that swirl around what is perhaps the most improbable, enjoyable, and deceptive documentary in years.

THE SUBTITLE on the posters for *When We Were Kings* reads, "The Untold Story of the 'Rumble in the Jungle.'" And what a story it is. Fought more than two decades ago in Zaire, the "Rumble," a heavyweight championship contest between Ali and Foreman, opened a new chapter in the history of boxing and sports in general.

This was, for one thing, the first truly global televised sports event, with the fight starting at 4:00 A.M. in Kinshasa so that American audiences could see it in prime time. The purse was likewise the largest ever up until that time—$10 million, split evenly between the two fighters—and it inaugurated the age of the super-rich athlete; Joe Louis, Jack Dempsey, and Rocky Marciano had not grossed so much during their entire careers as champions. The "Rumble in the Jungle" also transformed Don King, a former Cleveland "numbers czar" and convicted killer, into the promoter who would one day gain a stranglehold on professional boxing. Finally, in defeating George Foreman, who had been overwhelmingly favored to win, Muhammad Ali would brilliantly regain his heavyweight title, becoming only the second boxer in history to have done so, rehabilitating himself after his long suspension from the sport over Vietnam, and restoring his image after more than a decade as a figure of political and cultural controversy.

That Gast was able to film the event at all was due largely to dumb luck. On the strength of a movie

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called *Hell's Angels Forever!*, he had been hired to make a documentary not of the fight itself but of a three-day music festival in Kinshasa that was set to coincide with it—"a kind of African-American Woodstock," in Gast's own words. But events conspired against him. Funds for the movie were supposed to be drawn from the anticipated proceeds of the music festival itself, which was headlined by B.B. King, James Brown, and several African artists including Hugh Masekela and Miriam Makeba. Unfortunately, Zaire's ruler, the same Mobutu Sese Seko whose ruthless tenure has only now come to a close, invoked dictator's privilege and declared the concert free of charge.

Then, just five days before the scheduled bout, Foreman received a nasty cut above his eye during a sparring session. Though not permanently debilitating, the wound was severe enough to delay the fight for six weeks; it would not be held until October 30, 1974. But Mobutu, having already invested $10 million in the "Rumble," refused to permit the fighters, their entourages, or the various crews to leave the country (a fact the film gently glosses over).

Left with a camera crew and nothing further to shoot, Gast turned his lens on Ali. It is a good thing he did, for though the concert took place as scheduled, the footage from it that manages to make its way into *When We Were Kings* is dated and dull. Ali, on the other hand, is a wonder to behold, both physically—the contrast with his appearance on Oscar night is heart-wrenching—and mentally. As "the original rapper," to use the sobriquet applied to him by the film's publicists, he effortlessly extemporizes here on boxing and politics alike: "You think the world was surprised when Nixon resigned/Just wait'll I kick George Foreman's behind." Or, explaining his training regimen:

> I done rassled with an alligator,
> I tussled with a whale,
> I done handcuffed lightning
> and throwed thunder in jail,
> I murdered a rock, I injured a stone,
> I hospitalized a brick.
> I'm so mean I make medicine sick.

Still, despite the treasure trove of material he had captured on film, it took twenty years before Gast secured the necessary funding, mostly from the music producer David Sonenberg, to turn his 450 hours of stock into a movie. He finally hired the director Taylor Hackford, who, compensating for the fact that lengthy footage of the fight itself was prohibitively expensive to procure, added interviews with talking heads: the writers Norman Mailer and George Plimpton, the director Spike Lee, the Zairian actor Malik Bowens, and Thomas Hauser, Ali's biographer. Plimpton and Mailer had both been ringside in 1974, and have since written extensively about the event. In the film they do much to explain fight tactics and, along with Hauser, to flesh out the motivations of the principal figures.

When We Were Kings features an almost archetypical situation: Muhammad Ali, formerly Cassius Clay, as the "aging" thirty-two-year-old desperate to regain his title; George Foreman, seven years younger and incredibly strong, as the mysterious "kid" challenger. Today, Foreman is a benign and seemingly ubiquitous figure on television, whether in potato-chip commercials or on late-night talk shows; he is known not only for having won the world championship of boxing in a comeback fight in 1994 at the age of forty-five but for being a proud father and a dedicated preacher of the Christian gospel. But in 1974, the man who was then the world's strongest puncher was a dark and inscrutable figure, known mostly as being capable of extreme violence.

At the time, virtually every sportswriter considered Foreman a sure thing in Kinshasa. He had already demolished Ken Norton and Joe Frazier—two fighters who had also handed Ali his only defeats—and there were fears that Ali would be irreparably injured, disfigured, or killed in the encounter. On screen, in the original footage, the late sportscaster Howard Cosell is caught intoning, with his customary robotic gravity, "The time may have come to say good-bye to Muhammad Ali."

But as Mailer and Plimpton explain, Ali, facing a ferocious combination of external odds and internal doubts, crafted a brilliant strategy. During the weeks leading up to the fight, Ali announced that he aimed to defeat his lumbering Goliath of an opponent by outdancing him in the ring; his mocking nickname for George Foreman was "the mummy." Instead, and to the world's shock, he stopped Foreman by another means altogether, employing what would become known as the rope-a-dope. In Plimpton's words, Ali leaned back against the ring's restraints "as if he were a man looking out his window to see if there was something on his roof." For four straight rounds, he simply turned himself into a punching bag, absorbing an unrelenting bombardment from Foreman and counterpunching defensively from this restricted position. Only when Foreman had thoroughly worn himself out did the battered Ali explode. The knockout came in the eighth round.

As a chronicle of the pugilistic drama behind the "Rumble in the Jungle," *When We Were Kings* soars—indeed, it is a powerful reminder of why boxing was ever called the "sweet science." But it also aims to be more than a fight movie, offering itself as a document with much to say on matters historical and political. On those grounds, it not only fails, it does a great disservice: to history, to politics, and to its own protagonists.

HAGIOGRAPHY IS not too strong a term to apply to the treatment of

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Muhammad Ali in *When We Were Kings*. He is cast explicitly not just as the great fighter he was but as a prophet—specifically, a prophet of black liberation returning to Africa, the promised land. As a member of Ali's entourage puts it, "The king is going home to get his throne. From the root of the fruit, [Africa is] where everything started at." And Ali himself expatiates, from the cockpit of an African-piloted plane: "Africans are more intelligent than we are. They speak English, French, and African. We don't even speak English." From the perspective of the present, Spike Lee chimes in that before the fight in Zaire, "Africa" was a bad word to black Americans: "If you called a black man an African, they'd fight." In returning "home," Muhammad Ali changed all that.

But the main focus of the producers is not on the trumped-up image of Africa in the minds of black Americans. It is on the image, and the self-image, of Muhammad Ali. That image is nothing short of messianic. In the movie Ali calls himself a "tool of God," sent to Africa to "free" his people. "I'm gonna fight for the prestige," he says:

> Not for me, but to uplift my little brothers who are sleeping on concrete floors today in America, black people who are living on welfare . . . black people who have no knowledge of themselves, black people who have no future.

In the film's title song, rendered by a rap group called the Fugees, Ali is called the "black Abraham," a "ghetto messiah," and likened to an angel. A member of Ali's entourage compares him favorably with Jesus Christ.

If Ali is depicted as a saint and a hero, George Foreman, his fellow black American, plays the devil—the "monster" Ali says he has returned to the land of his ancestors to destroy. Indeed, Ali is often filmed walking among the native Zairians and leading them in a chant, "Ali, *bombaye!*" ("kill him!"). It takes the Zairian actor Malik Bowens to explain approvingly how this weird trick of perception—Foreman is not only black, but blacker than Ali—was pulled off. The secret was anti-Americanism. Ali, it seems, was already immensely popular in Zaire because of his well-publicized stance against the American involvement in Vietnam, whereas "we thought [Foreman] was white. He represented America." Besides, Bowens points out, Foreman arrived at the airport in Kinshasa accompanied by a German shepherd, a canine mascot closely associated in the minds of Zairians with the hated Belgian colonizers.

Of course it is standard fare for fighters and fight promoters to describe their contests as battles between good and evil (or, in this case, Good and Evil). What makes *When We Were Kings* different is the thoroughness with which Ali himself, strongly abetted here by the film's producers, mixes the standard morality play with black nationalism. To be sure, not everybody involved in the movie is prepared to go to quite the same lengths as Ali in romanticizing Africa in general or Zaire in particular. Mobutu Sese Seko, a tyrant out of central casting, naturally comes off badly, with Norman Mailer comparing him to Stalin and Hitler and noting that the ground beneath the stadium where the "Rumble" was scheduled to take place was stained with the blood of his slaughtered victims. Still, neither the filmmakers nor their talking heads care to look at Mobutuism as a system.

Zairian officials intended the "Rumble in the Jungle" as a celebration of that system, which essentially amounted to Afrocentrism at gunpoint. Its cornerstone, according to David Lamb in *The Africans* (1985), was Zaire's "authenticity" program, launched by Mobutu (in the dictator's own words) "in order to rediscover our soul, which colonialization had almost erased from our memories and which we are seeking in the tradition of our ancestors." All Western names and clothes were banned, Christmas was abolished, and paintings of Mobutu, the country's messiah, were hung in every church, school, and square. The "Rumble in the Jungle" was itself planned by Mobutu and his henchmen as a public-relations event to showcase the achievements of Mobutuism—as Muhammad Ali, for one, well understood. He is quoted in the movie as having said that "countries go to war to get their names on a map and wars cost a lot more than $10 million."

But, although one hardly learns this from *When We Were Kings*, the cause of international publicity in 1974 took a back seat to kleptocracy. As Stephen Weissman has noted in the *Washington Post*, Mobutu, who already had stashed away at least $3 billion, mostly in European banks, proceeded to funnel 42.5 percent of the worldwide proceeds of the fight into his private offshore accounts. Nor were other evidences lacking of Mobutuism in action: according to David Lamb, Zaire boasted 31,000 miles of main roads at the time of its independence in 1960; by 1980, thanks to Mobutuism, the number had fallen to 3,700. Though the Western press corps had a good six weeks to look around Zaire between George Foreman's facial cut and the actual bout, somehow reality seems to have eluded it, as it still eludes the makers of *When We Were Kings*.

And Ali himself? Spike Lee laments on-screen that young people today are so utterly lacking in historical knowledge they barely know who he was. But the movie will not help them overcome that deficiency.

Personally, by all accounts, and out of the ring, the Muhammad Ali of the late 1960's and early 1970's

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could be a sweet and loyal man. But publicly he was a follower of the Nation of Islam, and a dedicated black segregationist—two facts that are barely noted in this documentary but that help provide an intelligible context for the figure we see before us.

In November 1965, not long after he joined the Black Muslims and changed his name from Cassius Clay, Ali fought Floyd Patterson, a former heavyweight champion. Patterson was an athlete of the Jackie Robinson variety. A devout Christian, he was also deeply and publicly committed to integration and no less outspoken about the danger posed by Ali's new associations:

> Cassius Clay is disgracing himself and the Negro race. No decent person can look up to a champion whose credo is "hate whites." I have nothing but contempt for the Black Muslims and that for which they stand. The image of a Black Muslim as the world heavyweight champion disgraces the sport and the nation. Cassius Clay must be beaten and the Black Muslims' scourge removed from boxing.

The response from Ali took several forms. He excoriated Patterson for attacking his religion; called him an Uncle Tom and "the technicolor white hope"; and hurled at him one of his trademark poems:

> I'm gonna put him flat on his back,
> So that he will start acting black,
> Because when he was champ he didn't do as he should.
> He tried to force himself into an all-white neighborhood.

But the real response came in the ring. In the first round of their fight, Ali merely toyed with his outclassed opponent; thereafter, he childishly added sound effects—"boop boop"—to each punch he threw and baited Patterson with screams of "white nigger." As Thomas Hauser recounts the event in *Muhammad Ali: His Life and Times*, every time Patterson was about to drop, Ali would move away, allowing a moment's reprieve to enable the farce to continue. Patterson's humiliation continued into the twelfth round when Ali's trainer finally begged, "Ali, knock him out, for chrissake." *Life* magazine's headline for its coverage of the fight was: "Sickening Spectacle in a Ring."

Even more sickening was Ali's performance against Ernie Terrel in February 1967, a fight that had been previously canceled in the uproar over Ali's declaration that "I ain't go no quarrel with the Vietcong." In a bit of pre-fight drama, Terrel, a former sparring partner of Ali's, refused to use his new name and referred to him as Cassius Clay. Enraged at this resort to his "slave name," Ali promised to beat Terrel until he addressed him properly. In the ensuing fight, which Hauser calls "ugly and brutal," and which *Sports Illustrated* dubbed "a wonderful demonstration of boxing skill and a barbarous display of cruelty," Ali mauled Terrel beyond all necessity, stepping back after each blow and shouting, "What's my name, Uncle Tom, what's my name?" There were persistent rumors that Ali deliberately thumbed Terrel in the eyes, and even rubbed his eyes on the ropes.

In the *New York Times*, the sportswriter Arthur Daley said of Ali in those years that he was "a mean and malicious man whose façade continues to crumble as he gets deeper into the Black Muslim movement." So notorious was his behavior that it drew comment from public figures. Illinois Congressman Robert Michel rose on the floor of the House: "While thousands of our finest young men are fighting and dying in the jungles of Vietnam, this healthy specimen is profiteering from a series of shabby bouts. Apparently Cassius will fight anyone but the Vietcong."

CONTRAST ALL this to the behavior of George Foreman in the 60's and early 70's, behavior which goes similarly unmentioned in the film.

At the Mexico City Olympics in 1968, the black American track stars Tommie Smith and John Carlos, in an act that was widely credited to the example set by Muhammad Ali, shockingly offered the black-power salute at their victory ceremony. At those same Mexico City games, George Foreman won the Gold Medal for boxing. He rejoiced not by raising a gloved fist in defiance but by waving a small American flag as he virtually danced around the ring.

For this display of patriotism, Foreman won the contempt of black radicals and was made a virtual pariah in the American black community. "Imagine," he would later write in his autobiography, *By George*, "the Olympic heavyweight champion, an outcast. . . . That's when I began withdrawing."

The truth is that Foreman had long learned to hide his character beneath a fierce appearance. Even so, however, a few hints of that character emerge in *When We Were Kings*. He is seen, for example, taking exception to Ali's habit of inciting crowds of Zairians with the chant, "Ali, *bombaye!*" When one African approaches Foreman and shouts, helpfully, "Foreman, *bombaye!*," the boxer replies, "I don't like that," and says he would rather hear "George Foreman loves being here!" than "Foreman, kill him!" Again, in a filmed bull session, Foreman appears wholly uninterested in the Afrocentric philosophizing of Don King and the singer James Brown.

OF COURSE, that a team of Hollywood producers should be sympathetic to the anti-American politics of a stellar black athlete is hardly surprising. That they should be reluctant to speak ill of the Nation of Islam is also to be expected. But what is outrageous is that nowhere in the course of the film itself or in

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its inordinately long epilogue—in which we learn from Norman Mailer that George Foreman has indeed "transformed" himself into the lovable teddy bear he is today, and that Muhammad Ali, despite his medical condition and his ruinous marriages, is a happy and fulfilled man—is there the slightest hint that Muhammad Ali *himself* no longer holds to the prescriptions he offers for the ills of American blacks in *When We Were Kings*, or that he has altogether repudiated the Nation of Islam and its racist theology.

Ali's daughter, Khaliah Ali, has objected to the movie on precisely these grounds, writing (in an op-ed piece in *USA Today*) that her father's "separatist views on race as expressed in 1974" in no way reflect his views today. Moreover, asserts his daughter, Ali's evolution from being an adherent of Elijah Muhammad to being a follower of Martin Luther King, Jr.

> is no small thing because the belief that white people are "devils" and the belief that all people should be judged "on the content of their character" cannot be reconciled. . . . Make no mistake: My father has abdicated his Black Muslim ministry and has recanted his belief in the doctrine of racial separation. . . . We and Muhammad Ali should be spared any misguided attempt to use his pervasive influence to promote the aims of those who champion the reign of racism in America and the world.

It appears, however, that none of us will be so spared. In interviews and promotional material, Leon Gast and David Sonenberg have enthusiastically championed the Muhammad Ali of 1974 as a guide for today's youth, especially today's black youth. And Prakazrel Michel, of the rap group the Fugees, adds:

> You got to know where you're coming from to know where you're going. Muhammad Ali is where we came from, and a lot of kids are forgetting it, so we're telling them that this is what was and this is where we're going.

In the 23 years since the "Rumble in the Jungle," Muhammad Ali has definitively shed "what was" and has dedicated himself to family, philanthropy, and racial healing. But to the makers of *When We Were Kings*, as to the Hollywood crowd gathered on Oscar night, this is evidently one irony too many to comprehend, let alone to portray honestly. But then, the subject of Hollywood's wayward politics deserves a documentary all its own.

Music

The David Helfgott Show

Terry Teachout

David Helfgott, a middle-aged, mentally-ill pianist from Australia, was all but unknown outside his native land a year ago; today, he is one of the hottest tickets in classical music. His recording of the Rachmaninoff Third Piano Concerto, released in January,* rose within weeks to the number-one spot on the *Billboard* classical chart, and had sold 200,000 copies by the time of his New York recital debut, which took place in March at Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall. This concert, part of a North American tour which attracted mass-media coverage comparable to that received by Van Cliburn when he won the Tchaikowsky Competition in 1958, sold out within days of its announcement, as did two hastily scheduled repeat performances.

The immediate cause of Helfgott's near-overnight success was not his musicianship but an Australian-made movie, *Shine*, released in this country late last year.

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* *David Helfgott Plays Rachmaninoff* (RCA Victor Red Seal 74321-40378-2).

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Though movies about classical music and classical musicians were a staple of Hollywood studios in the 30's and 40's, they ceased to be popular long ago. But something about *Shine*, which purports to tell the story of Helfgott's life, appealed to the public; the film became a sleeper hit, in the end receiving seven Academy Award nominations, making its subject a celebrity, and preparing the way for the recording and recital events to come.

PRIOR TO the release of *Shine*, the known facts of David Helfgott's life could have fit neatly into a paragraph. Born in Melbourne in 1947, he went to London in 1966 to study at the Royal College of Music, winning the college's Dannreuther Award three years later for a performance of the Rachmaninoff Third. He then returned to Australia, where he suffered what his publicity material euphemistically describes as a "breakdown," subsequently spending "many years under treatment and out of a mainstream existence." In 1983, he met Gillian Murray, a professional astrologer; they were married the following year, and under her influence Helfgott began playing concerts again, eventually appearing throughout Australia and in Europe.

So much for the facts. *Shine*, directed by Scott Hicks, is a fictionalized account of Helfgott's life, and one whose essential accuracy has been disputed by members of his family. Yet the film remains the principal source of what can only be called the Helfgott myth, and on that ground must be considered seriously.

In *Shine*, then, we learn that Helfgott is the child of poor Polish-Jewish immigrants to Australia, virtually all of whose relatives died in the Holocaust. His father, Peter, is presented as a smothering sadist who beats his son, a bespectacled, bookish prodigy, whenever he shows any signs of independence, musical or otherwise. The American violinist Isaac Stern, impressed by young David's playing, arranges for him to study in America; but Peter, unwilling to let his family be broken up, forces the boy to refuse the offer.*

A few years later, David is offered a scholarship to the Royal College of Music in London. This time he defies his father, who disowns him with a prophecy of doom. Peter's words come true when David suffers a psychotic break in the middle of his prizewinning performance of the Rachmaninoff Third. After undergoing electroshock therapy, he returns to Australia, where his father refuses to speak to him. David is then institutionalized. When we next see him, years later, it is apparent that he is suffering from a comparatively mild but incapacitating form of schizophrenia (though the precise nature of his illness is nowhere specified in the film).

Helfgott's doctors refuse to let him play the piano, and it is only after he is finally de-institutionalized that he starts once again to perform, not in a concert hall but at a wine bar, where his virtuoso rendition of Rimsky-Korsakov's "Flight of the Bumblebee" makes him a local star. He meets Gillian, they fall in love and are married, and in the film's climactic scene he succeeds in giving a formal concert for the first time since returning to Australia.

As portrayed by the actor Geoffrey Rush, Helfgott is an irresistibly engaging fellow whose tendency to smash up apartments and speak in jittery, high-speed "word salads" of alliterative free association (a well-known symptom of schizophrenia) is less frightening than charming. Even at his least intelligible, Rush/Helfgott is fairly easy to understand, and given to gnomic utterances about war and the soul which are meant to show that his illness has made him both likable and wise. This characterization is central to the message of the film: Helfgott, we are to understand, suffers not from a chronic disease of the brain, treatable by drugs, but from a character disorder, caused by his father's abuse and curable through love. Revealingly, it is after he sleeps with his wife for the first time that he is able at long last to play a concert; in the final scene, his verbal tics have diminished to something resembling a bad stammer.

HOWEVER DUBIOUS its merits as a disquisition on the nature of mental illness, *Shine* is certainly a slick and effective piece of commercial entertainment. As such, it was all but predestined for success in the United States, a fundamentally optimistic country whose moviegoers like nothing better than watching affable heroes overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles, have great sex, and live happily ever after. But how much does the real-life David Helfgott have in common with the benign savant seen in *Shine*?

As it happens, Gillian Helfgott has published a memoir which, though no more specific than the film about the nature of her husband's illness, is considerably more candid about its continuing symptoms.† In it, she acknowledges implicitly that he is not competent in the legal sense of the word, describing him at the time of their first meeting as "a three-year-old in a body of a thirty-six-year-old." Yet she firmly insists that Helfgott's inability to function as "a regular member of society" is not an affliction but a choice—though one, it emerges, which she appears to have made in his behalf.

"One could," Gillian Helfgott acknowledges, "give [David] enough medication that shops and restaurants and crowded streets would not bother him." But, she goes on,

> then his time would be taken up with doing all the little tasks that regular members of society do,

* Isaac Stern has said that he does not remember having met Helfgott.

† *"Love You to Bits and Pieces": Life with David Helfgott*, by Gillian Helfgott with Alissa Tanskaya. Penguin, 337 pp., $11.95 (paper).

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and he'd be robbed of his passion to play, each and every day of his life. It wouldn't be difficult to try and "adapt" him to some arbitrary standard of normality, but then David would no longer be David and, by destroying the individual, one would risk destroying his magic.

I shall return to these extraordinarily presumptuous words later. But here I must pause to ask: just how "magical" *is* David Helfgott's artistry?

His best-selling CD, *David Helfgott Plays Rachmaninoff*, reveals that while at one time he must clearly have been a pianist of considerable accomplishment, he is no longer capable of performing Rachmaninoff's technically demanding music to anything remotely like a respectable concert standard. Indeed, upon the release of the CD in January, most of the reviews were negative, some quite sharply so. This, however, did not prevent his managers from following up *David Helfgott Plays Rachmaninoff* with the announcement of "The *Shine* Tour," in which he would make his North American debut at Boston's Symphony Hall and next give performances in Montreal, Toronto, New York, Los Angeles, and other large cities.

It was this tour, coming as it did on the heels of the Academy Award nominations, that made Helfgott news. Its promoters sought to neutralize possible adverse criticism by wrapping the pianist in greeting-card sanctimony—his American concerts, for instance, were billed as "The Celebration of Life"—and the reaction of concertgoers to his sold-out debut in Boston was overwhelmingly enthusiastic. Once again, though, the reviews were just as overwhelmingly unfavorable, with Anthony Tommasini, the critic for the *New York Times*, stating flatly that Helfgott was "not a finished pianist in any sense."

To this, Helfgott's handlers responded by going on the offensive: "I think there are some critics who perhaps act as sort of self-appointed guardians of an elite culture," Scott Hicks told reporters. "Maybe there are barricades that need to be stormed. Maybe the public has a right to be heard." And indeed, it could be argued that Helfgott's concerts were attracting large numbers of people who had never before attended a piano recital, and the pianist they were paying to see was by all accounts delighted to be playing for them. What harm could come of that?

At his New York debut, this question was answered as soon as Helfgott came on stage. No one even slightly familiar with the symptoms of schizophrenia could have failed to see that Geoffrey Rush's brilliant performance in *Shine* was—to put it bluntly—a lie. The real David Helfgott, it turned out, still wore the mask of insanity: the tic-like mannerisms shown in softened, romanticized form in *Shine* were in fact dismayingly pronounced. Moreover, his playing was far more disorganized in person than on disc, and his technique, though to some extent still intact, was divorced from any meaningful musicality. It was as if his hands remembered how to play the piano, but were doing so without the guidance of his mind.

A handful of people in Avery Fisher Hall realized what was happening. Isaac Stern fled at intermission, and I spoke to a pair of professional pianists who were shocked by the spectacle unfolding before their eyes: a mentally-incompetent man was being paraded before a paying audience for the financial gain of his managers. It was this latter fact, not the abysmal quality of Helfgott's playing, that I myself stressed when I reviewed the concert for the *New York Daily News*:

> [I]t seems to me that many people have been unwilling to grapple with the harsh truth about Helfgott, the subject of the movie *Shine*: he has been, and gives every indication of still being, profoundly mentally ill. He grunts, mutters, sings, and talks to himself—very loudly—as he plays. He seems not fully aware of where he is (a handler came on stage at concert's end, presumably to make sure Helfgott understood it was time to leave). And while he is undeniably capable of playing the music of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Liszt, and Rachmaninoff, at least in the limited sense of pushing down the right keys in the right order, the results suggested a weird cross between a gifted but uninhibited child and a player piano that has been badly regulated. . . .
>
> Two centuries ago, nice people went to asylums on Sunday, and gawked at the inmates. But times have changed. Today, we let the inmates out of the asylums and encourage them to live "normal" lives. Some preach strange religions on street corners; others give concerts at Avery Fisher Hall, and nice people pay $50 a head to watch them, and call it progress.

My review went farther in this regard than those of other critics who wrote about Helfgott's New York concert. But they, too, were unanimous in their judgment that he was mentally ill, and that his physical presence on the stage of a great concert hall was thus utterly inappropriate. This unanimity seemed to me noteworthy at the time, and in retrospect, and upon reflection, it seems more noteworthy still. Let me explain why.

A few days after hearing David Helfgott play at Lincoln Center, I went to the Museum of Modern Art in New York to see *Willem de Kooning: The Late Paintings, the 1980's*. The canvases hung at MoMA were painted well after de Kooning had developed Alzheimer's, and it should have been apparent to anyone acquainted with the effects of the disease that the man responsible for these pale, meaningless squiggles was no longer the painter

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whose landmark work of the 40's and early 50's had changed the face of American art. The signs of mental disintegration were impossible to ignore.

Yet ignored they were, both by the curators of the exhibit and by most of the art critics who wrote about it and who, unlike the music critics writing about David Helfgott, proved incapable of observing the bright line that separates mere eccentricity from outright insanity. For them, the senile de Kooning was not merely the equal of his early self, but arguably superior, with one critic going so far as to claim that "what's there may approach perfection as closely as human performance can."

In so saying, of course, this critic was merely taking the last, postmodernist step on a path down which many intellectuals have tripped in our time. Starting in the 60's, the intellectual historian Michel Foucault and the psychiatrists Thomas Szasz and R. D. Laing, among many others, argued that major mental illness was not a disease but an artificial construct, brought into being by our particular social arrangements—that, for instance, in Szasz's words, "the identity of an individual as a schizophrenic depends on the existence of the social system of psychiatry."

This theme melded nicely with the closely related notion, inherited from Romanticism, that insanity is actually a higher state of awareness, and the two ideas have since infiltrated our culture to the point where the products of genuinely deranged artists can be exalted, given the name of "visionary art," and even displayed in museums built especially for this purpose. In popular culture, these same ideas have given us not only *Shine* but such hit movies as *Rain Man* (1988), in which Dustin Hoffman plays an autistic savant who breaks the bank at a Las Vegas casino; *Forrest Gump* (1994), featuring Tom Hanks as a retarded man who achieves wealth, fame, and sexual fulfillment through his own unaided efforts; and, most recently, *Sling Blade*, Billy Bob Thornton's movie about the higher humanity of a mentally-retarded murderer.

In calling attention to the very different way David Helfgott's performance was treated by music critics, I hardly mean to argue that the musical world is free in general of the corrosive effects of cultural relativism. Far from it. Many a critic, after all, has written approvingly of the gender theory which elevates the efforts of third-rate women composers to the status of masterpieces, while others just as surely have praised the anti-music of John Cage, or the intensely politicized operas of John Adams. What, then, stopped them from praising David Helfgott's recital as a sterling example of visionary art? Perhaps it was merely a lingering bourgeois scruple, a nostalgic (if inconsistently applied) belief in the discredited notion of "quality" in art. Whatever it was, there is reason to be grateful for it.

DAVID HELFGOTT'S moment in the sun is not quite up. He is still giving concerts, and his CD continues to sell. But the David Helfgott Show is over, and he himself, in his real person, seems to have been forgotten almost entirely.

For the moviegoing public, of course, David Helfgott never existed in the first place: he was and is Geoffrey Rush, likable and wise, living proof that madness is just as good as sanity. For those who saw him in the flesh, or at this year's Oscar ceremonies (during which he played "Flight of the Bumblebee"), he is simply another freak in the electronic freak show that is postmodern culture, his tormented soul carved into a consumable good. Whether he is being exploited by those who have a stake in his career—indeed, whether the mere act of exhibiting him publicly might in and of itself be a moral wrong—goes undiscussed.

Yet it is for this reason above all that we should be haunted by the image of that pitiful man at the piano, whose wife has deliberately chosen to deprive him of the chance to live as others do. For it is an especially ghastly irony that events like "The *Shine* Tour" and *Willem de Kooning: The Late Paintings, the 1980's* should be taking place just at the moment when medical science has largely abandoned older psychodynamic theories of insanity in favor of objective "disease models." We know now that such psychiatric disorders as schizophrenia and manic depression can, in many cases, be treated effectively, allowing their victims to lead comparatively normal lives.

Whether David Helfgott's is such a case, we will probably never know. Even now, Gillian Helfgott can still write blandly in her memoir, "I will always fight for David's right to stay extraordinary, and do whatever is necessary to protect him from any pressures to conform." The more one ponders these self-righteous words, the clearer it becomes that to speak of the marketing of David Helfgott as an act of exploitation is to use too weak a word. It is, rather, a sin.

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Books in Review

Penumbras

A Matter of Interpretation: Federal Courts and the Law
by Antonin Scalia
Princeton. 159 pp. $19.95

Reviewed by
Franklin Hunt

In the 1950's, when the Supreme Court under Chief Justice Earl Warren began to restructure American politics and society along the lines of a rights-based liberalism, it relied heavily on expansive readings of the abstract constitutional language of "equal protection," "due process," "cruel and unusual punishment," and "freedom of speech." It even relied, in an opinion by Justice William O. Douglas, on "penumbras, formed by emanations" from the Constitution's abstract language.

For those opposed to the Warren Court's methods—and some were opposed to its methods even when, as in the case of *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, they agreed with specific decisions—this playing fast and loose with original constitutional meanings portended nothing short of disaster. The arguments of such people, however, were countered by proponents of judicial activism with reassurances that the Constitution was a "living" document that evolved as society evolved. And so, back and forth, the debate went.

That debate is hardly over, though in the end it may only prove that our courts lack any intelligible theory of interpretation whatsoever, statutory or constitutional. And in the meantime, the Supreme Court has kept on doing what it does, which is essentially whatever it wants. While there is a kind of free-floating discontent over this state of affairs, which periodically erupts in events like the November 1996 symposium in *First Things*, "The End of Democracy?," there has been nothing like a real revolt. Instead, the American public, and American politicians, now play the Supreme Court's game: if the Constitution only means what it "ought" to mean under changing moral standards, why not try to ensure, through the appointment process and otherwise, that judges share the public's morality?

The unhappy consequence of all this for constitutional rights is the subject of this book. It comprises a lecture by Justice Antonin Scalia, who joined the Supreme Court in 1986, together with comments on the lecture by Mary Ann Glendon, Laurence H. Tribe, and Ronald Dworkin, who are professors of law of differing ideological dispositions, and by Gordon S. Wood, a professor of American history. In his lecture, Scalia focuses on the reluctance of American judges to respect the laws written by democratic institutions. He blames this on a mindset derived from the study and practice of the common law, and urges in its stead the use of an interpretative method called "textualism." This, he believes, might yet "induce judges, as we have induced presidents and generals, to stay within their proper governmental sphere."

Scalia very amusingly describes the typical American legal education

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with its worshipful reading of opinions by great jurists, starting with the early English judges who created the common law in their capacity as agents of the king. All lawyers, he writes, want to emulate such judges, to think deep thoughts and do "broken-field running" through legal rules and precedents in order to get to exactly the proper result. And Scalia concedes that such an education is useful for the large part of state law that is still based on common law. But in the federal courts a different system prevails: not common law but the law that is set out in the codes, constitutions, and statutes drawn up by democratic institutions. And here, in Scalia's view, is where the trouble starts.

American judges, with their common-law, "Mr. Fix-it" mindset, treat statutory and even constitutional laws as so many obstacles to sidestep or avoid. Using a variety of devices, they pick and choose from various sources, including legislative history (which Scalia is famously hostile to), only to end up miraculously discovering that the true "intention" of the original lawmakers was the same as their own. Because constitutional decisions are so hard to reverse, Mr. Fix-it interpretation has given us, in Scalia's formula, a "morphing" Constitution, one which always means what the judges believe it should mean.

Scalia's remedy for Mr. Fix-it interpretation—"textualism"—seeks to establish not the lawmakers' "intentions" but the fair meaning of the words they used when they wrote the law. Words can never be given meanings they cannot bear, Scalia writes, and may thus have to be limited to only some of their *possible* meanings. Textualism—which, as applied to the Constitution, is also known as "originalism"—requires close attention to those words and, especially, to how the public would have understood them at the time they were written. As it happens, Scalia believes that the original meaning of a constitutional text is usually rather easy to determine, far easier than interpreting a text that is "evolving."

THE EXCHANGES between Scalia and his commentators (to whom he also responds) are of unfailing interest. Gordon Wood, the historian, sympathizes with the notion that modern judges have "run amok," but sees this as a problem that goes deep in our history and is not easily remedied. The conservative legal scholar Mary Ann Glendon, in a particularly illuminating comment, describes the highly developed interpretative methods of civil-law experts in Europe, showing how interpretation as practiced by the German Constitutional Court in particular has rightly made it the most influential such body in the world. As for Laurence Tribe and Ronald Dworkin, both well-known judicial activists of the Left, each takes sharp issue with Scalia. Both are clearly stung by the implication that they favor a "morphing" Constitution; to the contrary, Dworkin claims to be an originalist himself, and Tribe to be at least a kind of textualist.

For Dworkin, however, the "original" purpose of the Constitution—and, for him, this is infallibly signaled by the very abstractness of its language—was less to protect specific rights as then understood than to require judges to interpret and "revise" those rights "generation by generation." Tribe, for his part, also believes the Constitution enacted many abstract principles ("aspirations"), but he does not like either Dworkin's or Scalia's method for finding their meanings; he himself offers "candor," "humility," and tentative "insights and perspectives" by which to understand constitutional provisions that were "launched upon a historic voyage of interpretation."

The differences among these views are well illustrated by the question of the constitutionality of capital punishment. The Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments require proper procedures before depriving a person of life, and the Eighth prohibits cruel and unusual punishment. Read together, these provisions must mean that capital punishment *as such* is not cruel and unusual, although certain forms of it (like the "death of the thousand cuts") might be.

Scalia thinks "no textualist-originalist interpretation that passes the laugh test" could hold that capital punishment was unconstitutional. To Dworkin, by contrast, this is "bizarre"; once the judges, on behalf of society, conclude that capital punishment is cruel and unusual—and in his view they certainly should so conclude—the Eighth Amendment authorizes them to trump the Fifth and Fourteenth. And Dworkin, mind you, claims to be an originalist. Laurence Tribe, meanwhile, says he has not yet made up his mind on the issue.

Nor do the contributors to this book, prominent and important though they are, exhaust the current possibilities of constitutional interpretation, on capital punishment or any other issue. There are, for example, the critical-legal theorists who hold that law is determined by patterns of economic, racial, or sexual power in society. Then there is the pragmatism of Richard Posner, who argues that if law "works," it does not need theoretical foundations to support its legitimacy. And there is the postmodernist theory associated with Stanley Fish, according to which a text has no determinate meaning, but the interpretative "community" will in practice agree on a range of meanings.

AT THIS point one may be tempted to throw up one's hands altogether and agree with Gordon Wood and Mary Ann Glendon, who despair that there is, really, nothing to constrain American judges from manipulating the text as they will. But does that mean, then, that one should join the recent

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well-organized campaigns to appoint more judges who agree with the public's sense of things? To this, Scalia raises still another powerful objection.

In his view, most judges have *already* come to share the moral disposition of the American majority, and to act on that shared understanding; unlike many conservatives, he even believes that, by now, *Roe* v. *Wade*, the 1973 abortion decision, reflects this shared morality. So, if there was once reason to fear that the courts would exploit the vague language of the Constitution to override the wishes of the political majority, now there is, as well, reason to entertain the opposite fear: namely, that judges will side with the "people" to override rights which the majority no longer happens to care about as much as the Framers did, no matter how clearly those rights may be stated in the Constitution itself. Scalia notes how, for example, with the apparent approval of today's majority, the current Court has "gutted" property and contract rights and has limited specific procedural rights of criminal defendants, and predicts that more will follow. After all, constitutional rights are not on a ratchet, always increasing and never slipping back.

Liberal reviewers of *A Matter of Interpretation* have largely ignored this final and, to Scalia, crucial point, instead accusing him of misusing textualism and originalism as a blind for the enforcement of conservative traditions. But Scalia is dead serious; the only thing his argument reinforces—and powerfully—is, again, the crying need to "induce judges . . . to stay within their proper governmental sphere."

When Scalia joined the Court, many hoped (and others feared) that, being charming and congenial as well as brilliant, he would build a coalition to swing the Court in precisely that direction. His countermodel was Justice William Brennan, a coalition builder for the "living" Constitution so effective that he even captured his successor, David Souter (who apparently will be "channeling" for Brennan for decades to come). So far, however, Scalia has yet to build that coalition for restraint. Perhaps the task of persuading his colleagues not to be Mr. Fix-its is truly an impossible one. But if so, what do we need a Constitution for at all?

In the Crevasse

The Emigrants
by W.G. Sebald
translated from the German
by Michael Hulse
New Directions. 237 pp. $22.95

Reviewed by
André Aciman

W.G. Sebald was born in Germany, studied literature there as well as in Switzerland and in Manchester, England, and since 1970 has been teaching at the University of East Anglia, where he is now a professor of European literature. That he and I are both emigrants—a cross of immigrant, exile, and extraterritorial—and that we have both written on the impact of personal as well as acquired memories, and that the question of Jewish suffering lies at the root of our work (though Sebald is not himself Jewish) are coincidences that should have drawn me to his book, which was published in this country late last year and which in literary form combines a variety of fictional and nonfictional motifs. Still, or perhaps just so, I put off reading it long after it had been recommended to me,

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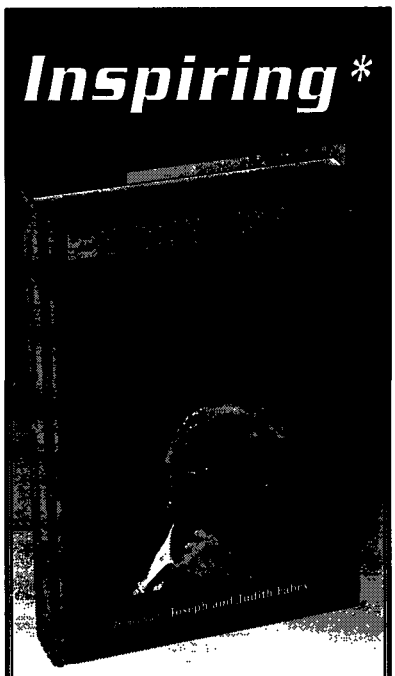

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first by a friend who found it "quite astonishingly beautiful and enigmatic," then by reviewers whose taste I either respected or did not respect, and finally by the editor of this magazine, who was not entirely sure I would like the book.

So when I began reading *The Emigrants* on the commuter train into Manhattan, I was half-expecting to find a reason to put it down by the end of the first page. But as things turned out, it was the labored flatness of the opening paragraph that reeled me in: its everydayness, and behind it, in the deliberate rhythms of Michael Hulse's extraordinary translation, that extra nudge in the language, part cadence and part syntax, that suggests literary excellence:

> At the end of September 1970, shortly before I took up my position in Norwich, I drove out to Hingham with Clara in search of somewhere to live. For some 25 kilometers the road runs amidst fields and hedgerows, beneath spreading oak trees, past a few scattered hamlets, till at length Hingham appears, its asymmetrical gables, church tower and treetops barely rising above the flatland. The marketplace, broad and lined with silent façades, was deserted, but still it did not take us long to find the house the agents described.

This strange braid of the lyrical with the irreducibly ordinary is precisely what gives Sebald's world its haunting, hypnotic, and, at times, even hallucinatory quality (not to be confused with anything so paltry as magic realism). Everything in *The Emigrants* is rendered through a prism of dispassionate observation, spiritual fatigue, and sudden revelation—an elusive blend of eloquence and silence, riddle and revelation. What is uncanny is that, shift the prism however you like, Sebald's subject remains nothing subtle at all, but rather our century's most devastating chapter, the Holocaust and the disappearance of European Jewry.

This is, though, a Holocaust not as experienced by its primary victims but as perceived from distant shores or after the fact. The light, like the pain, that is refracted in Sebald's prism is quite gray, a numb gray, the color of emptied cities, the color of ashes, of dust, of strayed lives that end long before death comes. Grayness lowers over the black-and-white photographs scattered throughout the book, as it does over the characters who people it: unfinished spectral beings, hollow, sapped, bruised, hopelessly and quite futilely homesick.

The Emigrants is divided into four parts, each a portrait—a parable—of a different character. The first section, "Dr. Henry Selwyn," is the shortest and for me the most uncanny of all.

Henry Selwyn, a successful doctor who is now the very picture of the retired county Englishman, hunting rifle and all, rents an apartment in his house in Hingham to the narrator and his companion Clara whom we have met in the extract above. The house is strange in a Gothic sort of way, its tennis court overgrown, its kitchen "on its last legs." The real owner is the doctor's wife, who is suspected by her husband of having amassed a fortune during their married years but who leads a separate life in the same house, in a pattern of estrangement that is not unusual in Sebald's characters. A mysterious kitchen maid also makes an appearance, though, again typically, nothing is made of her. In Sebald's prose, loose strands and red herrings are not exactly meaningless, and not exactly clues to an overarching meaning, but rather the specter of meaning in its larval stage.

One day the young couple is invited to dinner. Although Mrs. Selwyn is absent, her husband has invited an old friend, and to entertain his guests he shows them pictures of the two of them on a trip to Crete many years before; the narrator observes that this "return of [the men's] past selves was an occasion for some emotion." Then Selwyn tells the young couple about his experiences in the Swiss Alps before World War I, when he befriended a sixty-five-year-old Swiss guide by the name of Johannes Naegeli. The two had become very close and their separation when war broke out in 1914 was traumatic. Some time after, Naegeli, continues Selwyn, disappeared, and "it was assumed that he had fallen in a crevasse in the [Oberaar] glacier." "It is an old story," he adds, before admitting that now, fully 60 years after the fact, the image of Naegeli has begun to haunt him more than ever.

Another day, after the couple have moved to a different place in town, Henry Selwyn walks in bearing a basket of vegetables from his garden. In the course of the ensuing conversation he confesses that, recently, he has become prey to

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homesickness. And then comes a major revelation, spoken in a minor key: the doctor turns out to be no *echt*-Englishman at all, but to have come from a small village in Lithuania. From the names of relatives whom he mentions it rapidly becomes clear that his family, who emigrated at the turn of the century, and whose name was not Selwyn but Seweryn, is Jewish. Intending to emigrate to the U.S., they had boarded a ship they thought bound for that destination, but after about a week, "far sooner than we had reckoned . . . we entered a broad river estuary." Somehow they had landed in England.

"Certain things," writes Sebald, ". . . have a way of returning unexpectedly, often after a lengthy absence." He is referring to repressed sorrows, though it is not quite clear which sorrows he has in mind: the memory of an abandoned *shtetl* in Lithuania, the pain of emigration, Selwyn's youthful love for the Swiss guide Naegeli, his estrangement from a wife who may never have forgiven him his Jewish roots, or the loss of younger days briefly recaptured in the photographs of Crete.

But we are not done with revelations—nor with the way coincidence combines here with memory to produce something that supersedes ordinary experience and leads to a kind of meaning. Some time after these events, while vacationing in France, the narrator and his companion suddenly hear that the doctor has committed suicide with his own rifle. And then, in July 1986, as if the past never can be done seeping through the layers we place between it and ourselves, the narrator finds himself reading a newspaper on a train in Switzerland—only minutes before, "the memory of Dr. Selwyn returned to me for the first time in a long while"—and chances upon an article announcing the recovery in the Oberaar glacier of the body of an Alpine guide named Johannes Naegeli, missing since 1914.

"And so," the narrator reflects, "they are ever returning to us, the dead."

The Emigrants is about people who are not just ultimately homeless but whose lives have strayed, who missed the boat that never sailed, or who took the boat that sailed elsewhere. Henry Selwyn, *né* Hersch Seweryn, strays to England. Paul Bereyter, the protagonist of the second of the book's four sections who, the reader eventually infers, must also be partly Jewish, drifts back from Switzerland to his native Germany, where he ends up serving in Hitler's army. Ambros Adelwarth, also partly Jewish, wanders from Germany, to Switzerland, to Japan, and finally finds employment as a gentleman's gentleman for the Solomon family in New York. Finally, the artist Max Ferber, who escapes Germany during the war, settles in Manchester, the same city where the narrator, too, once lived and where Ferber "imagined [he] could begin a new life . . . from scratch; but instead, Manchester reminded [him] of everything [he] was trying to forget."

All are displaced persons, all caught staring into the void, all feeling "a long way away, though they never quite know from where." Paul Bereyter, like Dr. Selwyn, commits suicide several decades after the Holocaust; Ambros Adelwarth, after a life filled with world travel, consigns himself to electroshock therapy and wastes away in a "home" in upstate New York—in Ithaca, of all places. And Max Ferber wastes away, too, in his ash-ridden studio, painting in gray and

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feeling "closer to dust than to light, air, or water." Thus does the Holocaust exact final payment even from those who escaped its maw.

And it does so with staggering precision. Henry Selwyn, the man who shows his guests his gun, ends up taking his own life with it. Paul Bereyter, a schoolteacher obsessed with railroads, puts an end to his life by lying down upon the tracks. Ambros Adelwarth, having once delivered a friend/lover to an asylum, years later finds his own way to the same place. And Max Ferber, who escaped Germany to avoid the gas chambers in Poland, ends up in Manchester, an industrial city whose spewing smokestacks inevitably remind the narrator of the industrial center of Lodz, a heavily Jewish city once referred to as the *Polski Manczester*.

THINGS COME back; but nothing is ever restored. Time—that "disquiet of the soul"—works its way with Sebald's characters as it does with abandoned buildings and countries, abandoned gardens and homes. Like Sebald's prose, the photographs that pepper the pages of *The Emigrants* succeed in illustrating this point without fully illuminating it. An "x" sitting at the top of a group picture indicates the narrator's diminutive mother, and tugs at the reader with the resonance of her certain death; workmen sitting on the roof of a synagogue in Germany—the copper had been donated to the German war effort in World War I—have "Holocaust" written all over their happy faces; Max Ferber's father, at a ski resort, is shown in a pose that communicates, "I will never see my son again."

In *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes writes that a photograph is disturbing not by virtue of what it shows but because of what we know is about to happen to its subjects. The pictures in Sebald's book evoke, in the reader, a similar mechanism of psychic dread and recoil.

WHEN, IN the final section of *The Emigrants*, the narrator leaves Max Ferber's studio in Manchester and returns to his hotel—like so many hotels in this book, it is a large, luxury establishment that has fallen on very hard times—he thinks not only of his "own" Manchester of a quarter of a century earlier, when he himself first came to England as a student, but of a "hotel somewhere in Poland," and in thus thinking of Poland works his way back to "Manczester," and the Lodz ghetto during the Nazi occupation. His mind moves to a photograph of working girls in the ghetto—it is not reproduced here—and suddenly he sees three weavers "looking across at him" with such intensity in their gaze that he "cannot meet [it] for long." He could be staring at the abyss of time, or at the abyss of collective memory, or in any event at the land of the dead, the dead who are "always coming back" so many decades afterward the way the frozen body of Johannes Naegeli suddenly appeared, Rip-Van-Winkle-like, after two world wars and an entire lifetime.

"I wonder what the three women's names were," the narrator finally asks, still mesmerized. "Roza, Luisa, and Lea, or Nona, Decuma, and Morta, the daughters of night, with spindle, scissors, and thread."

Except in books, one seldom comes face to face with fate, let alone with the Three Fates. And yet, while reading *The Emigrants*, I thought repeatedly of a friend of mine whose father had escaped the Holocaust as a boy on the last train headed for England. Two years after the end of the war, six years after last seeing his parents, my friend's father, who was by then studying in Canada, received, exactly as does Max Ferber, a letter from his mother. In typical Sebaldian fashion, the package arrived too late.

What must he have thought? On recognizing his mother's handwriting, must he not have caught himself doing something he had sworn never to do again: namely, hope? I called my friend to urge that he buy a copy of *The Emigrants* for his father. But then, a half-hour later, I called back to retract the suggestion: what need had *he* to be brought back into the past which had claimed the lives of both his parents? The need, rather, is ours, and *The Emigrants*, an astonishingly beautiful book, just as my friend had said, meets our need in a consummate act of artistic fatedness.

Renegade

Radical Son:
A Generational Odyssey
by David Horowitz
Free Press. 468 pp. $27.50

Reviewed by
Christopher Caldwell

IN THE mid-1980's, at a rally in support of Nicaragua's Communist government, David Horowitz was for some reason invited to speak. Whatever the organizers may have had in mind, Horowitz did not tell the crowd what it wanted to hear. For Horowitz, a prominent radical in the 1960's, had recently broken with the Left. Instead of denouncing the United States and singing the praises of the Sandinistas, he proceeded to warn those in attendance at the Berkeley, California, gathering that if they were "to pause for a moment and then plunge their busy political minds into the human legacies of their activist pasts, they would instantly drown in an ocean of blood."

MANY INTELLECTUALS have made the voyage from Left to Right in recent decades. But few have come from as deep inside the hard Left as

CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL *is senior writer at the* Weekly Standard *in Washington, D.C.*

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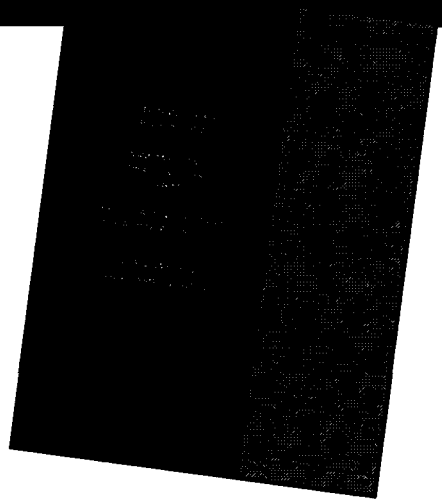

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Horowitz, and none has retained more of the 60's style. Horowitz, in fact, prides himself on his determination to continue speaking "in the voice of the New Left—outraged, aggressive, morally certain." This quality is conspicuously on display in *Heterodoxy*, the broadsheet which Horowitz edits and which presents the conservative case in the most willfully incendiary way—its cover photos have sported Karl Marx in drag, Charlie Chaplin in Nazi garb, and, for a Clinton reelection issue, a bullet-riddled American flag. Horowitz also runs an institution in Los Angeles called the Center for the Study of Popular Culture, which monitors political correctness and serves as a watchdog against extremism on the Left.

It is hard to think of anyone who has turned on his own past with more fury than David Horowitz. *Radical Son*, his memoir, charts a trek from one political commitment to something approaching its opposite, and the events that propelled him on his way.

Unlike some 60's radicals, Horowitz did not acquire his politics—at least his first set of politics—in an act of rebellion. His parents, first-generation Americans, appear in these pages as thoroughly decent, even admirable people, each of whom had a minor, and a major, character flaw. In his mother, the minor one was diffidence; in his father, self-pity. In both, the major one was unswerving loyalty to Joseph Stalin and the USSR.

As loyal members of the American Communist party, Horowitz's parents followed the Soviet line in whatever direction it zigged or zagged. When, in the 1930's, Stalin feared Hitler's designs, the Horowitzes favored rapid American rearmament. On August 23, 1939, when Hitler and Stalin concluded their nonaggression pact, Horowitz's parents became instant pacifists—only to abandon this position no less suddenly on June 22, 1941, when the Nazis attacked the USSR. Nothing could shake their faith: not Khrushchev's revelations about Stalin's crimes, not the invasion of Hungary in 1956, not the crushing of the Prague Spring in 1968, and not the publication of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* in 1974.

DAVID HOROWITZ's own trajectory took him to Columbia College, graduate school at Berkeley, and then a spell in London where he hobnobbed with such fixtures of the European intellectual Left as Jean-Paul Sartre, Bertrand Russell, Trotsky's biographer Isaac Deutscher—and a lunch companion named "Lev," who was an agent of the KGB. On his return to the U.S. in the mid-1960's, Horowitz became an editor of *Ramparts*, the leading radical magazine of the time; as a budding New Left theoretician, he also wrote a number of much-talked-about books, including *The Free World Colossus* (1965), an indictment of American conduct for its crimes in the cold war.

Horowitz also became closely involved with the Black Panthers. Although the Panthers, under the leadership of Huey Newton, were already something of a glorified street gang, Horowitz was flattered, he writes here, to be of service to a real "revolutionary vanguard," and chose not to notice the handwriting on the wall. He helped the Panthers establish a "Learning Center" in Oakland, which, in fact, served as a front for criminal activity, as a military training facility, and as a way to tap into millions of dollars in California state and local education funds. Horowitz's success in this endeavor made him a trusted confidant of the Panther elite.

Horowitz dates the onset of his disillusionment to the time when he used his clout to get a job at the Learning Center for an acquaintance, a white accountant named Betty Van Patter who had worked with him at *Ramparts*. Weeks into the job, she disappeared; a transparent lack of curiosity among the Panther leaders made it clear they knew where she was. In fact, she had been murdered; her body soon washed ashore in the San Francisco Bay.

Around the same time, Fay Stender, Huey Newton's former attorney, had become the target of a Panther vendetta for her refusal to smuggle a revolver into prison to help the gunman George Jackson escape. One day, a hit man arrived at her door, forced her to sign a "confession," shot her five times, and left her for dead. A year later, paralyzed and hiding from reprisal in Hong Kong, Stender took her own life.

If Horowitz's conscience began to gnaw at him, his colleagues took a different view; for them, curiosity about Van Patter's or Stender's fate was tantamount to disloyalty to the cause. Horowitz recounts how, at Stender's funeral,

> speaker after speaker went up to the platform to remember Fay—lawyers who worked with her, comrades who had served with her, friends who loved her. They were political activists who would normally have made a political symbolism out of the most trivial occurrence. Yet . . . they had nothing to say about the sequence of events that had ended her life.

It was this silence that shattered Horowitz's world. "If we [progressives] actually succeeded in making a revolution in America," he recalls thinking, "and if the Panthers or similar radical vanguards prevailed, how would our fate be different" from that of the victims of Stalin's purges? "Our injustice, albeit mercifully smaller in scale, was as brutal and final as Stalin's. As progressives we had no law to govern us, other than that of the gang."

Horowitz broke with his associates, and began his journey to the Right. By the 1980's, he was a fervent supporter of Ronald Reagan, and, with his colleague Peter Col-

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lier who had traced a similar path, was writing books like *Destructive Generation: Second Thoughts About the 60's.*

How, ultimately, is David Horowitz's transformation to be explained? After all, many 1960's radicals dwelled in the same tawdry cesspool, witnessed the same murders or lesser acts of crime and duplicity, yet continued to cling fervently to the cause.

One explanation may be generational. Horowitz was approaching the seasoned age of thirty when he entered California radicalism in the late 1960's, and was thus slightly older than his fellows. Having married in 1959, he was also burdened with heavier responsibilities. His deviation, then, may be seen as that of a man who had come to place some value on middle-class existence.

A second possibility, one that runs somewhat counter to the first, is that the very depth and intensity of Horowitz's radicalism led inevitably to a spasm of self-correction. The writer Paul Berman once remarked with some asperity that "Horowitz is in the American vein. He doesn't correct; he converts." Horowitz quotes this remark in *Radical Son* only to mock it, but there may be more to it than he is willing to admit; one piece of evidence, of course, is his own fiercely polemical style.

A third interpretation might also be adduced. As the gripping pages of *Radical Son* make clear, Horowitz possesses a fearless capacity for self-examination—hardly a noted virtue of the radical Left. In the end, it is this capacity which may have rescued him from an association with murderers. It certainly enabled him to reinvent himself, and to forge a new career as the kind of person his parents had no doubt warned him against.

Cruel and Unusual

The Creation of Dr. B: A Biography of Bruno Bettelheim
by Richard Pollak

Simon & Schuster. 478 pp. $28.00

Reviewed by
Joseph Adelson

One of the strangest stories in the recent annals of social science is the Icarus-like career of Bruno Bettelheim (1903-90). At his peak, Bettelheim was one of the most respected psychologists in the nation, celebrated for the compelling accounts he wrote of his work with autistic children at the Orthogenic School he headed in Chicago—children whom he could restore to normality through the ministrations of love and insight. He was also admired for his writings on Nazi concentration camps; these drew upon his own self-described experience as one who, unlike most of his fellow European Jews, had survived by refusing to yield to the camps' insidiously dehumanizing regime. Finally, he was the author of a best-selling book on fairy tales and their deeper meanings, *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976), and collaborated on a widely used study of the dynamics of prejudice.

With rare exceptions, Bettelheim's writings drew effusive praise from all sides, in psychological journals as well as in general highbrow publications. From the middle 1960's until his suicide in 1990 at the age of eighty-six, he was a celebrity, one of the few psychologists whose name was well known outside the profession. The great change took place only after his death. But then, several former residents of the Orthogenic School began to publish articles or letters that portrayed Bettelheim not as a saint and a wise man but as a monster and a brute, and described the Orthogenic School as primarily a venue for his often physically abusive explorations of his own rage. Among the earliest and most devastating such articles was one in Commentary.*

As it happens, there had been some earlier testimonies along these same lines. But so persuasive was Bettelheim's carefully cultivated image as an avatar of therapeutic love that they had been ignored or dismissed. Nor did the new accusations go altogether unchallenged. Yet somehow the tide had turned, and in the last six or seven years an entirely different picture of the man has begun to come into focus. This excellent book, though it is not the first story to have emerged since Bettelheim's death and will likely not be the last, calmly describes the transformation.†

I use the term "calmly" to make the point that, although Richard Pollak has strong feelings on the subject, his book is not a heavy-breathing exercise in character assassination. Pollak came to his task, he tells us, only because his brother, then a resident at the Orthogenic School, died following an accident while on leave. Driven by the urge to find out more about his brother's life, Pollak sought out Bettelheim for an interview. The encounter appalled him. Bettelheim insisted that the death had been a suicide—and one, moreover, that he himself had predicted—and then went on to condemn the boy's parents, and particularly his mother, as the cause of his mental disorder. This account of things, Pollak knew, was both untrue and needlessly cruel—why demonize a woman who had already suffered so much? Yet he came to

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* "Who, Really, Was Bruno Bettelheim?" by Ronald Angres, October 1990.

† Nina Sutton, an author more protective of her subject's reputation, published *Bruno Bettelheim: A Life and a Legacy* last year (Basic Books, 606 pp., $35.00).

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see that, in its wanton, narcissistic self-certainty, it was also *echt*-Bettelheim.

I should also say here that I began reading this book armed with a certain degree of inside knowledge, having been told by some who had worked with or under Bettelheim not only that the highly flattering autobiography he had constructed in his writings was not to be trusted, but also that his was a difficult personality. This foreknowledge, however, actually made me more rather than less skeptical of Pollak's enterprise. It would not have surprised me to learn of occasional eruptions of temper on Bettelheim's part. Anyone familiar with the stresses of clinical work with very disturbed patients will be slow to condemn another. Nor would I have been deeply upset to learn that, in building his career in this country, Bettelheim had overstated his credentials, his training, and his experience; anyone who has spent time poring over academic résumés is used to that sort of thing.

But the portrait emerging from these pages surpassed my worst imaginings. Regarding credentials, we find not merely exaggeration but outright fraud: academic degrees concocted, work experience fabricated. We also learn—what there was no prior reason to suspect—that substantial portions of Bettelheim's work were plagiarized from others (a charge Pollak documents through word-by-word comparisons). Finally, his cruelty toward his patients was by no means occasional. In both spirit and practice, the vaunted Orthogenic School was itself close to a concentration camp for much of the time. Reading through these pages, ever more amazed and disturbed, I found myself thinking at one point, well, at least he did not sexually molest the adolescent girls under his care. But the thought came too soon—he did.

DECEIT. PLAGIARISM. Brutality. Sexual abuse. How did he get away with it? Bettelheim was not some minor figure, carrying out his mischief in the obscure crevices of the profession. To the contrary, he worked at a major hospital and at a distinguished university, and he published and lectured widely. He also made claims of therapeutic success that were so extravagant as to invite scrutiny. Yet on the whole he remained immune from criticism. Why?

We can provide only partial answers. Bettelheim could falsify his credentials because he had been educated in Central Europe and too many records had been lost in war and upheaval to document any accusation that might be raised against him. Similarly, without first-hand information it would have been difficult to challenge his heroic portrayal of his experiences in a Nazi concentration camp.

Then, too, psychology is a notoriously difficult discipline to evaluate. Even in a fairly small community like my own, where therapists come to know each other's work more directly than in larger centers, one can judge the quality of one's peers only in a few cases and only some of the time. We rely on hearsay, or on a very general sense of a therapist's competence. And when it comes to assessing improvement in patients, let alone cure, all of us know that, given a forceful enough therapist, and a pliant enough patient, some symptoms are fairly easy to "improve," even if the improvement is often shallow and unstable.

These factors and others would have prevented a skeptic from speaking out, even setting aside understandable hesitancy about questioning the integrity of a formidable man who was known to be vindictive when challenged. Better, in sum, to keep the peace. And I suspect that is precisely what happened. There were therapists in the Chicago area who had their doubts about Bettelheim, but voiced them only privately. As for those who worked with him and were therefore most qualified to criticize his methods, they were too dependent on him, economically or psychologically or both, to act.

Even to those of great sophistication, Bettelheim could be a compelling figure. I met him only once, at the home of a close colleague who (like Bettelheim himself) was a Viennese intellectual turned psychologist. My colleague was a person given to scathingly sardonic views of the high and mighty, yet he clearly admired and to some degree had fallen under the spell of Bettelheim's keen intelligence and the sharpness of his clinical observations. To this day, Bettelheim has his partisans, who keep their eyes fixed on just these qualities of mind while remaining steadfastly unaware of or indifferent to the rest: the lies, the intellectual larceny, the brutality. It will be interesting to see how long they can continue to do so.

Dystopia

A People's Tragedy:
The Russian Revolution
1891-1924
by Orlando Figes
Viking. 894 pp. $34.95

Reviewed by
Daniel J. Mahoney

WHAT EXPLAINS the terrible trajectory taken by the Russian Revolution of 1917?

This question has tended to divide students of the Russian past into two opposing camps. There are those, like the historian Richard Pipes, who find in the Communist dictatorship and the descent into the

DANIEL J. MAHONEY, *a new contributor, is an associate professor of political science at Assumption College in Massachusetts and the author of* The Liberal Political Science of Raymond Aron.

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gulag a deep impress of the old czarist autocracy and the old patrimonial state. And there are those, like Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who claim that that same dictatorship represented instead a fulfillment of the vision of Karl Marx and thus a radical *break* in Russian history. A British historian, Orlando Figes, has now entered the fray with *A People's Tragedy*, a 900-page history of the Russian debacle. It succeeds handsomely as an engrossing account of the revolution, but falls short of its implicit goal of resolving this great historiographical debate.

FIGES TAKES up the story in the year 1891, when the czarist autocracy was grappling unsuccessfully with widespread famine in the Volga region and individual Russians began to organize a massive relief effort on their own. This, for Figes, was a decisive moment: an independent civil society had been born, increasingly aware of its own capacities and in quest of political representation. The overriding question now facing the imperial regime was whether it could accommodate the aspirations of this independent civil society while maintaining order and stability.

In the end, the regime failed to meet this historic challenge; war and social disintegration brought it tumbling down. How and why did that happen? Figes's particular method is to embark on a social-political narrative that takes us from the Volga famine through the next decades, highlighting the upheavals of peasant life, the rise of a class of liberal gentry and professionals, the subversive role played by radical intellectuals and revolutionaries, and the debilitating split between reformers and absolutists within the imperial regime itself. It then proceeds through World War I and the two revolutions of 1917 and brings the story to a close in 1924 with Lenin's death, when the fundamental elements of the totalitarian order that came to be known as Stalinism—"the one-party state, the system of terror, and the cult of the personality"—were all in place.

A colorful portraitist, Figes interweaves his account with the activities of five figures whose lives illuminate the revolutionary drama. Thus, he traces the meandering career of the writer Maxim Gorky from socialist opponent of the old regime, to courageous critic of Lenin's dictatorship, to abject public apologist for Stalin, to (probable) victim of Stalin's terror. And we are introduced to other, more obscure, characters from the Russian past like Sergei Semenov, a peasant reformer and disciple of Tolstoy who attempted to introduce modern farming techniques in his village and met vociferous opposition from all sides.

Semenov's story, which casts light on a whole group of thoughtful and determined men committed, sometimes at great personal risk, to building a free and modern Russia, is in some ways the core of the book. As Figes tells it, the czarist approach to the peasant problem was to undertake a program of land reform; this it conducted under the stewardship of Pyotr Stolypin, in the opinion of many the greatest statesman Russia has ever known. But Stolypin's enlightened project of dissolving the quasi-communal order of village life and creating a class of landowners out of utterly backward peasants came to naught. It was completely overturned in the chaos of 1917, when the peasants, manipulated brilliantly by the Bolsheviks, seized and plundered the country's land.

The Bolsheviks, of course, were at this time nothing more than a small sect on the far fringe of the political spectrum. But by garnering the support, or at least the neutrality, of those who tilled the land, they acted, in Figes's view, in harmony with a number of mainstream Russian traditions. The way had been prepared for their seizure of power, he argues, not only by a populism rooted deeply within the pathological nihilism of the radical intellectuals but also by the anarchism that stemmed from the leveling sentiments of the peasantry itself.

But as Figes also clearly shows, the Bolsheviks' objective was never an empowered peasantry. Rather, it was nothing less than the extermination of the peasantry as a class. Some of the most gripping pages of this book portray in words and photographs the efforts of peasants to defend themselves against the onslaught of "War Communism" in the years 1918 through 1921. The ultimate success of the Bolsheviks in this onslaught, which resumed with collectivization under Joseph Stalin, led to a political, economic, demographic, and spiritual catastrophe from which Russia has yet to recover.

WHAT, THEN, are we left with? In one sense, Figes seems to explain the rise of Communist totalitarianism as a continuation of the Russian past. The outcome was, in his words, a "Russian tragedy," having less to do with the utopian premises of Marxism than with the particular historical circumstances that hindered successful modernization after 1891. In this accounting, the lion's share of blame lies with the autocracy, which heedlessly resisted the establishment of representative political institutions and the rule of law. While Figes does not skirt over the crimes of the Bolsheviks, he views the impulse propelling them as itself a "very Russian thing."

Yet, as Figes recognizes, Bolshevism, and the Marxian heritage from which it grew, was in some ways not at all a "Russian thing." Thus, in the closing pages of his book, he switches intellectual gears and begins to emphasize the purely ideological foundations of the USSR's "vast experiment in social planning." Since, as he writes, the Soviet model "has often led to the

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same disastrous ends" wherever it has been applied around the world, "one can only conclude that its fundamental problem has more to do with principles than contingencies." Unfortunately, this sensible conclusion collides head-on with the notion of a specifically *Russian* tragedy.

A People's Tragedy, then, never does arrive at a convincing interpretative equilibrium. Still, it has its unmistakable virtues. For one thing, Figes richly conveys the human dimensions of the catastrophe. For another, he powerfully brings home the blindness of the imperial authorities as well as the brutal illiberalism of revolutionary activists, and he clarifies the way in which these two forces conspired together to transform a chaotic social revolution into an unparalleled political calamity. If he has not resolved one of the more long-standing debates about the Bolshevik Revolution, he has, at the very least, helped pave the way for future attempts.

Spring Fever

Coming Apart: A Memoir of the Harvard Wars of 1969

by Roger Rosenblatt

Little, Brown. 234 pp. $24.95

Reviewed by
Elliott Abrams

On April 9, 1969, approximately 135 left-wing Harvard students, many of them affiliated with Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), seized the central administrative office of the college in the heart of Harvard Yard. This protest against America's intervention in Vietnam and Harvard's "complicity" in that conflict marked the beginning of what Roger Rosenblatt, in this memoir, calls "the Harvard wars."

Rosenblatt, now a contributing editor at *Time* and the *New Republic*, was back then a young English instructor and something of a golden boy. The only member of his Harvard Ph.D. class to have been offered a teaching position at the college, he was highly popular among students, well regarded by his colleagues, and in the good graces of the administration, which as a sign of favor appointed him to preside over Dunster House, an undergraduate residence.

Harvard itself was at that moment at a peak of post-Kennedy-era prestige and self-satisfaction, not least because it had apparently escaped the protests that had recently rocked Columbia, Berkeley, and other elite schools. At Christmas in 1968, Harvard students were singing carols at president Nathan Pusey's residence and still wearing coats and ties to dinner each night. By spring, however, the coats and ties were off; along with warm weather, a wave of trouble and violence had arrived.

The main events are easy to recount: the occupation of University Hall on April 9, and the forcible expulsion of the deans and others who worked there; the "bust" that same night, in which the occupiers were ejected, arrested, and a number of heads (including those of curious student bystanders) were cracked by the 400 state and local police whom the administration had called in to do the job; protests against the bust by many more students, including a three-day student strike; and then endless faculty meetings and debate about whom to discipline and how.

In astonishingly short order, a great university found itself torn apart. Who was most at fault? In Rosenblatt's judgment, the extremists who stormed into University Hall may have been the worst but were not the only offenders. The harm they wreaked was compounded by the administration's bungled decision to retake the building, greatly inflaming student opinion. The damage was then multiplied tenfold by the craven, "morally careless" attitude of the faculty which failed to defend the university's integrity in the face of the student assault.

Rosenblatt is undoubtedly right in suggesting that SDS enjoyed little support in the student body at large and that the initial occupation of University Hall had met with widespread disapproval. Only three years earlier, as he reminds us, 2,700 undergraduates had signed a letter of apology to Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara after his car was blocked by a few protesters. While opinion at Harvard may have subsequently shifted to the Left, it had not shifted far enough to generate approval for pushing deans down flights of stairs. In this light, the administration's decision to call in the police was, Rosenblatt concludes, a serious blunder; a student body that would otherwise have turned against the protesters was instead "radicalized."

Just how radicalized is another question. My own memory as a Harvard undergraduate in those days is of an antic quality in the demonstrations not fully captured in Rosenblatt's account. He reports, for example, that "so many protests and events were held in the Yard that the grass was beaten into a dust-bowl." True, but such gatherings were often not very serious. When 1,500 students met in Harvard Stadium to vote on whether to strike (i.e., skip class), there were an amazing number of paper airplanes in the air, soaring across the stadium and eventually covering the playing field. And if 1,500 students showed up, nearly 3,500 did not. (Some students, moreover, actively

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resisted the SDS; their voices are almost entirely absent here.)

YET THOUGH Rosenblatt's appraisal of student attitudes is somewhat off-pitch, he is correct in his assessment that the faculty acted reprehensibly. In those days, Harvard's professors were a predominantly well-intentioned, progressive-minded group whose credo, in Rosenblatt's words, was

> mutual reassurance that everybody shared the same liberal beliefs about everything, even if that were not the case, and as long as those opinions did not put the believers in any real jeopardy.

When faced with students assailing the "liberal" traditions any university must defend—like civility in behavior and intellectual standards—a good many faculty members found the jeopardy too great.

Faculty meetings were filled with endless speeches alternating personal attack with weak-minded blather, as in the feeble contribution of the Nobel Prize-winning chemist James D. Watson: "I believe in trusting the young." A good many faculty members were just plain scared—of becoming unpopular with their students, of the disapproval of their colleagues (with possible adverse effects on their careers), and no doubt also of the violence.

There were notable exceptions, of course. Those who spoke out tended to be older, European-born professors who had had a brush with fascism. Some native-born Americans were also among the brave; those Rosenblatt names include James Q. Wilson, Samuel Huntington, John Dunlop, and Samuel H. Beer, the last-named of whom came to feel about students

> the way I do about Germans. There are some good Germans. Some of my best friends are students. But when I hear the word student I pull back reflexively.

WHAT LASTING effects, if any, did the eruption have on Harvard and beyond? Rosenblatt is right to connect the takeover with the faculty vote several months later establishing an Afro-American studies department, and with a general decline in standards thereafter. The faculty, having previously approved a plan to develop black studies at a measured pace, was now propelled by "moral carelessness" and pressure from black students and allied radicals to establish a full department overnight. In their eagerness to avoid giving offense, they broke all precedent and invited students to take part in governing the department, even giving them a say in such decisions as tenure awards. Under these conditions, not surprisingly, no first-rate faculty members could be found, and the Afro-American studies department rapidly degenerated into what Rosenblatt derides as an academic "slum."

The spring of 1969 was a turning point of sorts not just for Harvard but for Rosenblatt, too, the beginning of what he calls his "slow, evolving exit" from the university. He came to see that his own pose as a "careless charmer" was a false one— "I did not like the students as much as I had pretended to"—and that he was living in a "coward's ambiguity," attempting to please everyone of every political hue. When he was appointed to a special disciplinary committee chosen to decide whether and how the students who had taken University Hall were to be punished, he was compelled at last to take a stand. Voting to throw sixteen out of Harvard, place ten on probation, and "admonish" the rest, and volubly defending that decision, were enough to end Rosenblatt's days as a sympathetic figure to liberal and radical students. Harvard and Rosenblatt were mutually disillusioned; within a few years he left and took up punditry.

ROSENBLATT WAS not alone in his disaffection from the radicals. *Coming Apart* contains a small but wonderful collection of photographs. One of them shows Martin Peretz—then an instructor at Harvard, now the chairman and editor-in-chief of the *New Republic*—hiding behind a great deal of hair and peering through 1960's granny glasses. For Peretz, the takeover was, as he is quoted here, "the beginning of my turn politically from Left to Right." He came to rue his own modest role in feeding fuel to the radicals' fire: "I still feel guilty about one of those kids . . . he learned about leftist politics in my class, and then he went to extremes."

But Peretz's reevaluation, however symptomatic it may have been of strains within American liberalism to which many others were also responding in those years, was an exception on the Harvard campus; and Rosenblatt's own conversion was followed by a lapse back into a long journalistic career as a "careless charmer" in which he has rarely taken sharp positions that might offend. Nor did the inmates who took over the asylum for a brief moment ever suffer much of a penalty; many of them are now tenured radicals themselves. As for those on the faculty entrusted with preserving the integrity of the university and the values of a democratic society, their flaccid defense of a fragile institution was likewise a sign of the times, and of the times to come. Today, such behavior can be found under many guises in many realms. In this respect, *Coming Apart*, Roger Rosenblatt's elegantly written memoir, is aptly named.

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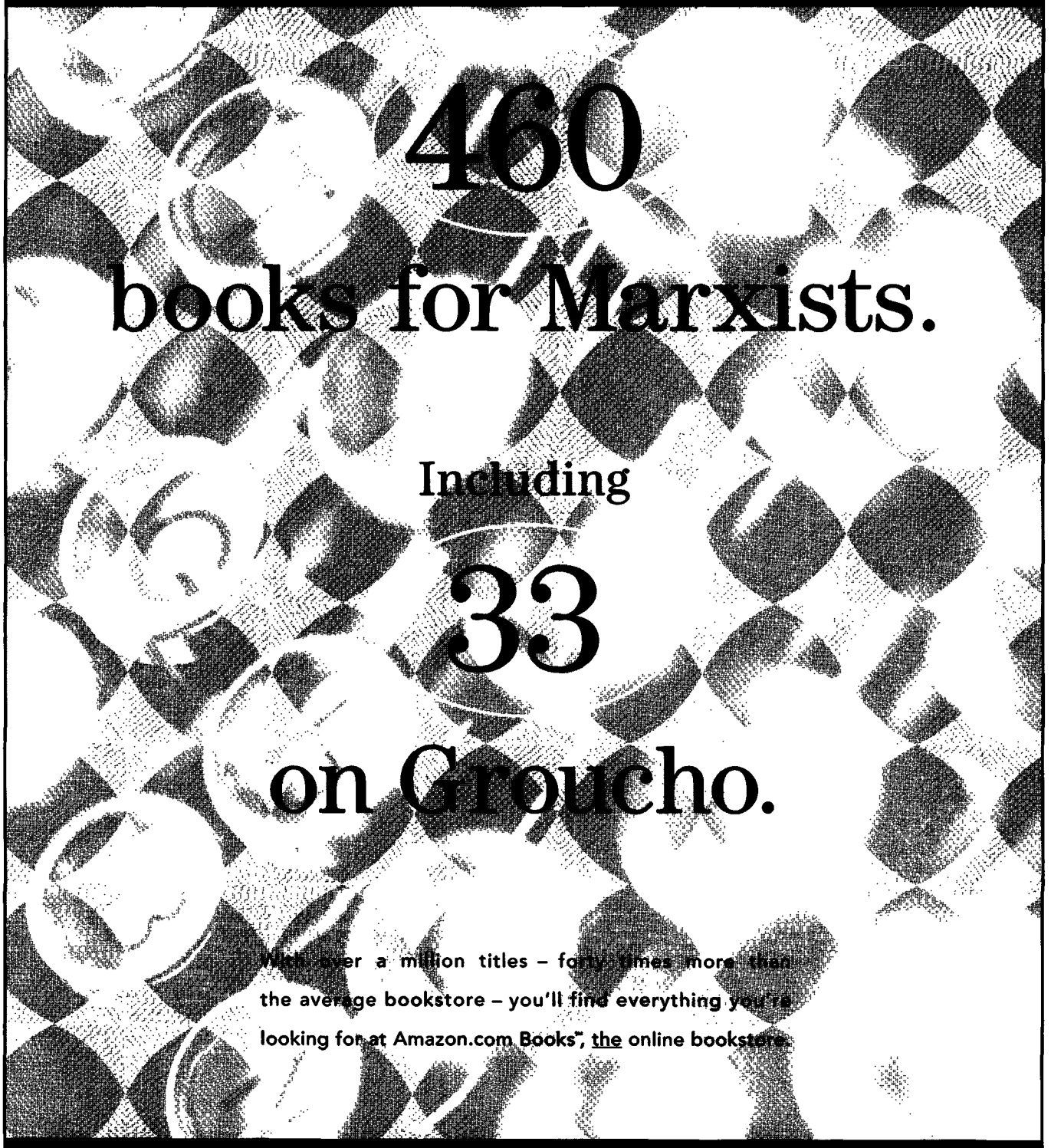
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Theodore Waitt

Gateway 2000, North Sioux City, SD. 34. Married, 4 children.

Talked out of joining family cattle business. By father. Left college senior year to start computer mail order business in farmhouse. With $10,000 start-up loan secured by grandmother's CD.

"Everybody was heading to Silicon Valley. So I picked a cornfield."

Cofounded Gateway 2000 with partner, Mike Hammond. 1985. Direct-market PC seller and manufacturer based in South Dakota. First year revenues $100,000. Explosive growth due to low costs, fast service. Expanded overseas, 1993. Marketing coup: chose Holstein as company mascot.

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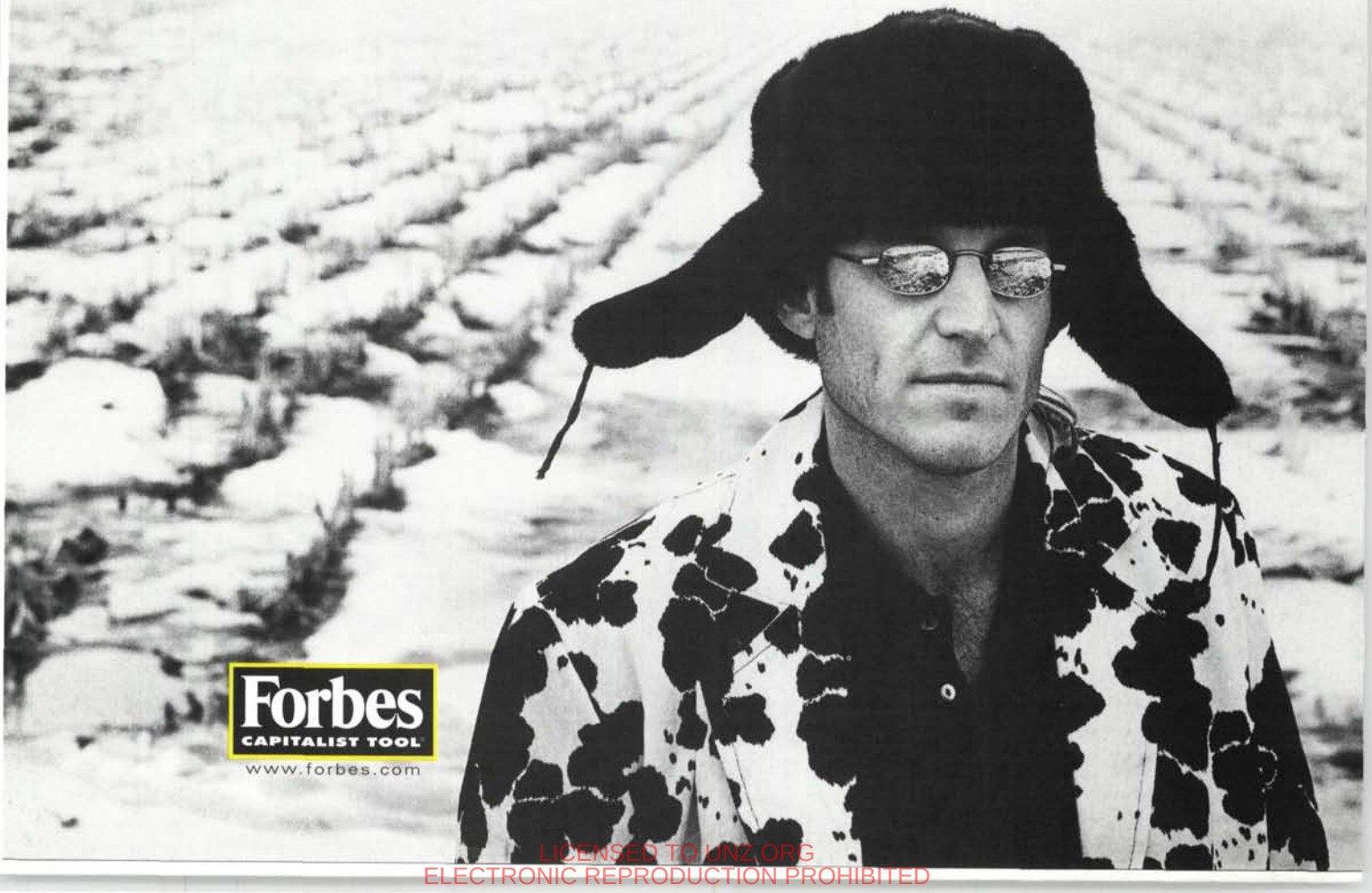
Started reading Forbes as a student at the University of Iowa in 1984.



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